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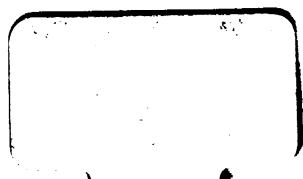
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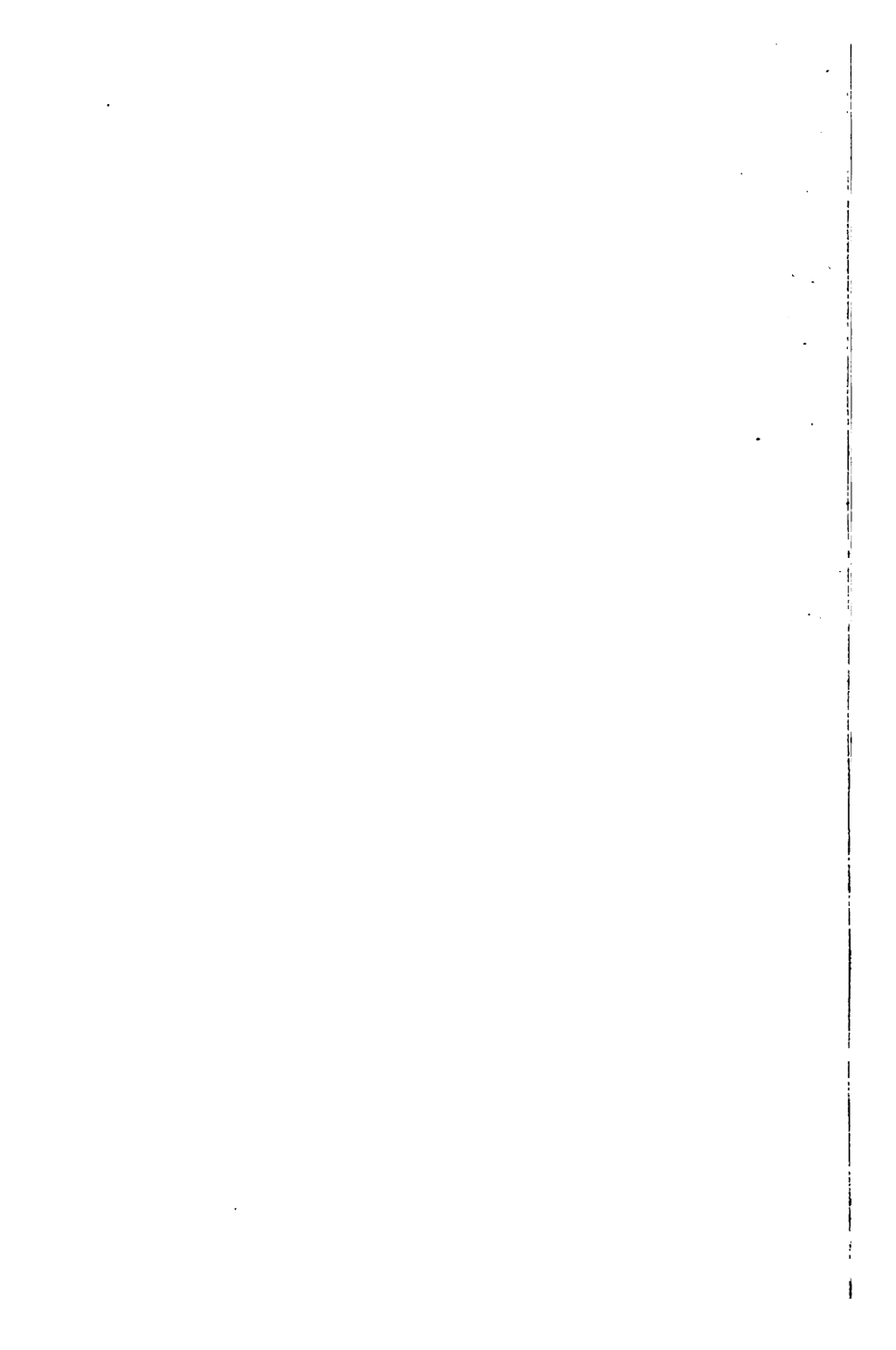


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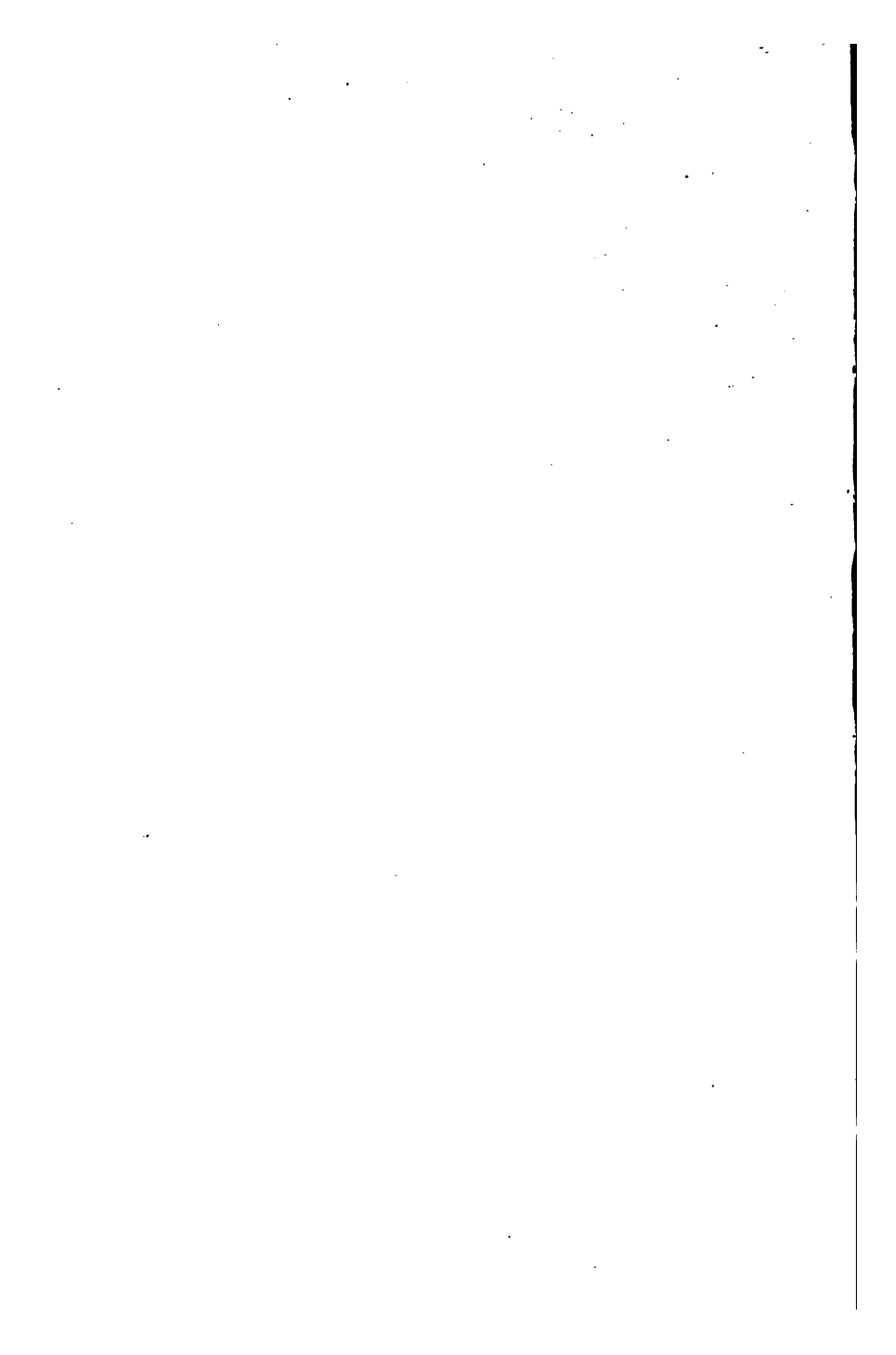


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Hevinson

BY



**THIRTY DAYS WAR BETWEEN  
GREECE AND TURKEY**



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SCENES IN THE THIRTY  
DAYS WAR BETWEEN  
GREECE & TURKEY 20

1897

BY  
HENRY W. NEVINSON

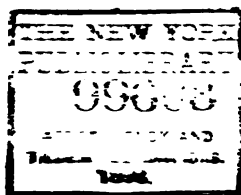
*The better part of discretion is valour*

—FIRST BUGLE CALL



London  
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1898



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## INTRODUCTION

It is very hard to say when the English people is really moved. There are so many who are ready to be moved at anything, that for any cause, no matter how foolish, a crowd can always be gathered. But there are as many more who can be moved by nothing, so that every cause, no matter how noble, is sure of a stolid body of opposition, which boasts of its common sense and freedom from hysterical excitement. One party is called quixotic, and the other respectable; and both terms are generally used in derision, because one side is judged by its most foolish members, and the other by its most ignoble. The people being thus divided among themselves, it is usually impossible to speak of popular emotion without such qualifications as make it seem half-hearted.

But at the beginning of 1897 the cause might have been thought powerful enough to

stir almost the whole nation. For eighteen months a large number of men and women had their hearts sickened and their feelings outraged by the succession of massacres in Armenia and Constantinople; and though there were probably not ten in the Empire who enjoyed their dinner less on that account, there was an uneasy feeling even among the respectable party that something ought to be done. Lord Salisbury had publicly warned the Sultan that he must set his house in order; and in that warning he fairly represented the national conscience. For on this question of Turkey and Armenia it was at least as sensitive as Lord Salisbury's own. It dimly remembered that, less than twenty years before, England had undertaken the protection of Armenia, and when Lord Rosebery came forward with the assertion that the obligations of a treaty could not be expected to last for twenty years, it was felt that a good deal of self-defence, explanation, and historic parallelism was needed before such an excuse could be made to appear decent.

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There was a general opinion, at any rate, that, whether something was done or not, the days of the Turkish Empire were numbered. The Sultan appeared to have been smitten by that insanity which is known to precede destruction by heaven; and it was therefore illogically argued that heaven wished to destroy him. People who hesitated to stake a penny on the protection of the helpless, found justification in the text, "Vengeance is mine: I will repay, saith the Lord," and in leaving further action to a higher power they chose a course which seemed to them at once secure, inevitable, and cheap. Turkey had been so long reported rotten as well as cruel that many supposed it would fall to pieces of itself, and it seemed hardly worth while to interfere when the punishment for crime was working itself out so satisfactorily without our aid.

When, therefore, we became gradually conscious that there was a Cretan question as well as an Armenian, it appeared to be but another step towards that inevitable and heaven-

directed dismemberment. Crete, one of the latest and noblest of Turkey's conquests, an island to which freedom had so often been promised and then refused, had dared once more to rise against Turkish misrule and crime. The news came fast—the murder of Christians in Canea, the burning of the Christian quarter, the destruction of Christian villages, the general revolt, the dispatch of the Greek fleet and of a handful of Greek troops, the bombardment by our own ships of Christians fighting for liberty. Politicians might sneer about the desire of Greece to augment her real estate, and improve her position in Europe—a desire natural enough, after all, in any living nation. But most Englishmen knew that Greece was moved by an irresistible impulse to defend a kindred race appealing for her protection, such an impulse as Britain would feel if the Hebrides were conquered by an alien power, and treated with cruelty such as Crete had suffered. To a motive of that kind English sympathy has always been quick to respond, and but for

## BETWEEN GREECE AND TURKEY 5

three things there is no doubt the action of Greece would have been applauded from one end of the country to another.

Unfortunately, Greece was in debt to the point of bankruptcy, she did not declare war, and some of her race had a bad reputation in the City. The great majority of English people have a Roman respect for the letter of the law in judging the actions of others, and the action of Greece was illegal. The great majority of speculators have a Semitic respect for the regular payment of interest, and Greece did not pay. The great majority of sportsmen have an English respect for the rules of the game, and some knew Greeks who did not play on the square. Thus English opinion was sorely divided. The average well-to-do and educated man soothed his conscience by a professed belief in the Christianity of the Great Powers; and even in the Quixotic party only those upheld the cause of Greece who were guided in their ordinary actions by something quite different from decrees of state. Fortunately there were sufficient of these to



raise a considerable stir. Public meetings were held; eloquent speeches were made; large crowds listened to them with excitement and applause, and many, even up to the last moment, thought that public opinion had expressed sufficient sympathy with the Cretan cause to justify the Government in taking up an attitude which would have ended Turkish oppression in that quarter for all time, and have rendered a war unnecessary and impossible.

But as the expression of all emotion, especially of sympathy and indignation, is a wasteful and deteriorating thing unless it can be at once followed up by definite action, some of us looked round to see what further could be done. It was evident that if a battalion of Englishmen would volunteer for service in Greece, their presence in the field would have considerable effect, but when I first approached the Greek Chargé d'Affaires and the Byron Society on the matter, the idea was considered unworkable. A little later on, however, the "Liberal Forwards" took the thing up for themselves, and by their invita-

tion I was able to assist in sorting out the very mixed lot of volunteers who offered for service. Captain Cullum Birch was appointed to command our force if sufficient numbers could be got together. He left for Athens on March 15th to prepare the way. I followed two days later; but just before starting I had been introduced to the editor of the *Daily Chronicle* which represented, if it did not inspire, the views of the Quixotic party to which I myself belonged, and a few days after reaching Athens I was very unexpectedly appointed one of its correspondents for the campaign. Certainly no one could have had a wider or more varied experience than this appointment gave me. But in spite of all that I have often envied those—no battalion, alas! but only a small company—who served under Captain Birch whether as officers or privates, and I deeply regret that it was not mine to stand side by side with that heroic little body of Irishmen, English, and Scotch, who, at Mati, Velestino, Pharsala, and Domoko, won the respect of all who saw them.

The scenes which I have chronicled in this book do not pretend to be in any sense a history of the war. They are merely personal experiences, entirely free from all questions of military science, politics or controversy. With hardly an exception I have narrated nothing but what I actually saw myself, though here and there I have just traced the course of events elsewhere, merely to show the significance of what was going on around me. During the war I relied on no reports of any kind given me by other people. I listened to them with gratitude and said no more about them. In war I doubt if it is ever possible to speak with assurance of anything except what one has seen. So that I have narrated simply what any traveller would have experienced, and any traveller might have seen if fortune had put him in my place. I know well enough what nasty things the metaphysicians say against the character, against the possibility even, of naked truth. Yet, except by metaphysicians in search of the absolute, these scenes of daily life may be read as the truth of what happened around me—the truth as I saw it.

## BETWEEN GREECE AND TURKEY 9

To the editor of the *Daily Chronicle* I owe my thanks for permission to republish extracts from my letters, though all of them have been rewritten.

The illustrations by Mr C. Percival Small are from photographs or drawings which I brought home.



# THE THIRTY DAYS WAR



## CHAPTER I

### SCENES BY THE ROAD

I STARTED from London on March 17th, 1897, and was rejoiced to learn from the little tufts of wet shamrock for sale in the streets that it was St Patrick's day. For I knew that I could count on that saint's blessing upon any dubious enterprise.

At Turin young Italians with flowing cloaks and neckties were parading the town in open four-wheelers, collecting pence for the Cretan insurgents who were fighting for liberty as Italy once had fought. Up and down the broad, straight streets they drove, blowing a trumpet before them, and followed by a nice little train of wondering children.

At Brindisi a band of Italian volunteers,

red-shirted and all too lightly equipt for the war, came on board. Professor Waldstein came too, bearing despatches from Rome to Athens, and as we sailed a Greek began to converse with me about the trust of Greece in English favour. Listening for a time, I said suddenly, "You are Sigalas." "I am," he answered. I had heard of that notable dragoman only three days before, and could not then foresee the extraordinary service he was to do for me in the months that followed. The slow-pacing steamer brought us in the morning to the Albanian coast, where the Acroceraunian mountains, scarred with deep ravines by storms and frost, rise from the water's edge. At first they appear quite barren and untenanted, but a closer watch will show a few grey little villages, hardly distinguishable from the screes, hung half way up the steep to escape the pirates' reach. At Santa Quaranta, a miserable little port with half a dozen houses, the destruction of which was, I believe, afterwards the one successful enterprise of the Greek fleet during the war, we stopt

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to take on board a pack of Turks and Albanians on their way from Janina to Constantinople. It is the custom in Epirus, among Greeks and Turks alike, to keep a kind of family shop in Constantinople, the brothers in each family taking turns in looking after it for a year or two and bringing back the profits. But no Greeks were then allowed to leave Janina for fear they should join the Greek army, and so they were only Turks who came shrieking and bundling on deck, with stacks of rugs and skins, and bags of provisions, and a live sheep for the journey, and a whole pack of women swaddled up in white sheets, with black gauze masks, embroidered with silvery flowers, over the gap where their faces ought to have been. All the peasants and poor among them settled down at once in casual heaps upon the main hatchway and arranged their open-air encampments for the night with a rather dignified disregard of unessentials, the mothers stuffing cold boiled haricot into the children's mouths from time to time to keep them happy. But



on going into the second class cabin I was rather distressed to find that all the other berths were now full of dusky, bearded forms, which frowned or glared at me like a vision of the Arabian nights. Most were effeminate Softas, with white scarves wound round the fez, but under me was a smart little Turkish officer in some infantry regiment. His boy attendant dangled his feet from the edge of my bed. Above my head lay a Softa with a green scarf, showing he had made the pilgrimage to Meccah. This distinction gave him the right to lead the whining howl which they all kept up at intervals, lying on their backs and chewing garlic meanwhile as they watched the Christian's movements. Howling and garlic appeared to be exactly the things to induce religious frenzy, and I thought it possible they would declare a Jihad or Holy War during the night. I was relieved, therefore, when Professor Waldstein invited me into the first class and allowed me to read the proofs of his brother's notable book on "The Sub-Conscious Self." Towards evening heavy rain

came on, and, looking up from the proof-sheets, I saw the sons and daughters of the Prophet huddling closer together and wrapping themselves round into shapeless lumps of rugs like enormous cocoons, whilst over them the sailors were attempting to stretch a tarpaulin sheet far too small to cover them unless they lay four deep. They all appeared very sub-conscious.

Meanwhile we glided through the narrows between Corfu and the rocky promontory of Sybota, where the fleets of Corinth and that savage Corcyra went dashing into each other, prow to prow, just before the long years of warfare between Greek and Greek. No doubt many an armoured soldier who fought on deck that day "as in a land battle" more than twenty-three centuries ago, was still lying very quiet now far beneath the gentle swirl and beating of our screw.

## CHAPTER II

### IN ATHENS

ALL Greece was a-tiptoe with excitement, we are told, at the beginning of the war which ruined her ancient states, and as there were crowds of young men both in Athens and the Peloponnese who did not know what war meant, they welcomed it with joy. The only difference now was that I believe there was not a single Greek, young or old, who knew what war meant. Anyhow, they were all a-tiptoe with excitement, proud, as well they might be, that of all Europe they alone had dared to defy the oppressor of their race in Crete. And that gives a peculiar pathos to the memory of the shouts of enthusiasm which greeted our train as it steamed into the desolate little Athenian station near the mound of Colonus. Crowds had come down to welcome the fifty Italian volunteers, who all the journey long had sung and danced without ceasing,

officers and men together, with their arms round each other's necks, and now were paraded through the streets under the Greek flag, singing as they marched. Some weeks later I met them again, under finer circumstances, but singing no more.

The aspect of Athens was like a modern play enacted on a background of *Æschylus*. As in a satiric comedy, the brilliancy of electric light gave warning of the gaping chasms in the street. Marble buildings stood ready to be finished when bankruptcy ceased. In the ante-chambers of ministers and the entrance halls of hotels, journalists waited, watching each other without admiration. Morning and evening, the news-boys started in line for their flat race to the public square. Day and night the café politicians prophesied of things to come, and thundered their exhortations to the brave. Here and there some mother or a man too fond of life went crawling after a Deputy with a petition for exemption. From all sides came volunteers and Reservists crowding into the city—giants from the Islands, with baggy trousers flopping

between their ankles and hereditary weapons stuck in their belts, shepherds from the Peloponnese in fleecy coats and hoods, workmen from Patras in the second-hand leavings of Whitechapel. Just before ten the ladies of Athens drove out, as like Parisians as fashion could make them, on their way to ladle soup into pitchers for the refugees from Crete, whilst they protested that never in their lives before had they been out before twelve, but were ready to make any sacrifice for their country. The air was full of questionings and alarms. "The blockade has begun." "Has the Crown Prince gone to the front?" "A caterer in the Peiræus has received orders to supply forty-five English ironclads on their way to the Dardanelles." Day and night the rumours flew. And up at the barracks white-haired officers waving eloquent swords implored the recruits with tears in their voices to form fours correctly.

But behind all these elements for satire lay that solemn reality which it is always so much more difficult to recognise or describe. One of

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the smallest and poorest nations in the world had dared to defy an empire more than twenty times its size. Everyone with any notion of military power knew that if Greece were left unaided, the Turk would be at the gates of Athens within three months. Before I left England a soldier said to me, "Greece will be cracked like a nut." That was well known to the very few Greeks who were not blinded by patriotism and the justice of their cause. It is true that once before, when Greece, in a similar way, had dared to aid her kindred across the sea against another oriental despotism, she had been saved as by a miracle in extremes after the barbarian host had entered the land and Athens had been seized and burnt. But miracles are uncommon, and the help of the gods was not to be counted upon now, even against an enemy compared to whom the Mede was a civilised and gentle power. Even in Athens there were a few to whose eyes ruin and death were already visible, and whose hearts beat low with apprehension, as from day to day they listened to the footsteps of approaching calamity.

Yet it was impossible to resist that appeal of kinship, for it rose from their streets and at their very doors. Thousands of Greeks, who had escaped the massacres in the towns of Crete, were herded in Athens and the Peiræus. For months past the pauper state of Greece had fed the Armenians who had escaped from the Turk and pitched at Colonus. Hardly had the Armenians gone when the Cretans arrived in utter destitution. There they now were, cast helpless upon the city. Day after day I visited them in the shelters which the Government had provided. I think there were most in the Peiræus. Scores of families were lodged in the large National schools which occupy all one side of a big square in that haphazard town. The education of the Peiræan youth had entirely ceased, and they appeared to have no fear of ever "resuming their studies." The long class-rooms were divided up by the school benches and desks into little pens, like a well-organised sheep fair. Each pen was a separate family's home, and with a good deal of make-believe and closing of the eyes considerable

decency was maintained. Starvation also is a fine safeguard, and all were starving. They would have died of hunger but for those soup-kitchens, organised, in the first instance, for the Armenians by a Scotch lady on the strength of a £10 note, and afterwards developed into a national undertaking. The Government granted to the kitchens one penny a day for each family, and there were a certain number of subscriptions besides. A woman or girl of the family went with a bowl or pitcher to the kitchen, waited her turn, often for hours together, received the soup or stew from the laced and ruffled ladies, and brought it back to the pen. The Cretans, being comparatively of untainted blood, are a finer stock than the Athenians. The children and girls are often very beautiful; but as in Greece generally, and in all places where women are obliged to work during child-bearing, the men are the handsomer type of the race. And to me it was especially pitiful to see some huge, black-bearded Cretan, who had counted as a rich and industrious man till the Turks burnt him out in Canea, now sitting with the babies



listlessly waiting for the few spoonfuls of beans and broth which were to keep him alive till next day.

In Athens itself most of the refugees were quartered in some ramshackle unoccupied houses in the poorest slums. I was taken to them first by an old Indian Colonel who went about among them incessantly, talking in English, and simply cheering them up by his good humour and manly voice. But there were some whom even he could not cheer. One family said that in the January massacre at Canea they had seen their next floor neighbours hacked to little bits and thrust into their own oven to bake. It may have been a lie, but the people were still evidently regarded by their friends with a certain importance from the horror of their experience. In another family we were told the woman had seen her two-year-old child taken out of his bed, held up head downwards by one foot, and split down the backbone like a pig. Again it may have been a lie, but after having been in Canea and heard much about the massacre from eye-witnesses, I doubt the story less now than at first. Anyhow,

that was the sort of thing the Greeks in Athens kept hearing about the Greeks still under the Turk in Crete. We know the horror and rage in England when similar things were told about English women and children in the Mutiny. But because Greece was small and poor, the majority of educated Englishmen thought she "deserved a strait-waistcoat" for not remaining unmoved by the slaughter and torture of her kin. As to the last case I mentioned, tender-hearted people would probably expect that I found the mother seated motionless in a corner day after day with her face between her knees. But that was not so. She was going about much like the rest, tidying up, making things clean, trying to keep warm. Sometimes she wandered out into the stony land of Attica and gathered a few weeds to sell for salad in the streets. The family lived in the end of a corridor or passage at the top of a many-storied house. There was no glass in the windows, and it was bitterly cold at night. Looking over the roofs from the corridor I could see the old Acropolis rising high above the town. There

was the rocky cleft where the Persians climbed up, and the wall of defence with drums of columns built into it. And there stood the House of Erectheus, and just one corner of the Parthenon glowed with brilliant orange in the sunshine. And when once I came late in the evening I could still see that forsaken home of gods looming up there, grey as a ghost against the stars.

At last, after a fruitless attempt to reach the Ambracian Gulf and Epirus by sea, I drove down to the Peiræus on Saturday evening March 27th, determined to get to the frontier somehow, though I sculled my own boat. I had with me a young Greek whom I had met by chance in Athens, and engaged to help me with the language. He had been brought up in England, and always displayed a flattering but vain desire to be thought an Englishman. As a Greek he was of great service to me, and he accompanied me through most of the campaign, though often much against his will. For I think he attributed all my actions and purposes to the direct inspiration of the devil. We may call him Mavro.

At the Peiræus we found the usual sun-burnt and excited crowd swarming about the quays. It was still impossible to get a ship to Epirus, for everything that could float had been seized by Government to carry troops and stores to Thessaly. I determined therefore to go to Thessaly and make my way to Arta over the central ranges of Pindus. This was in accordance with the instructions given me by the representative of the *Daily Chronicle* in Athens, and it had the further advantage of being the very thing I wanted to do. I had in fact already marked out the route on my map, and had made inquiries about it of the guides, who all assured me the thing had never been done and was quite impossible. However I determined to try it, and we contrived to get on board a little steamer bound for Volo that night. It was crammed with officers and horses, but there was just room for us to lie down in one corner. I had been told for certain that the Crown Prince with his staff was really going to start for the front now, and his departure was necessarily a very serious thing.

As I stood on deck and watched the scene in that ancient harbour, and saw the young, untrained soldiers hurrying on board, or still parading the quays with flags, whilst the crowd shouted for war, it was impossible not to recall the departure from that same harbour of the Athenian fleet and army which once sailed away for the conquest of Sicily, whilst all the population of Athens came down to the Peiræus to cheer them as they went, and the triremes in mere gladness of heart raced each other over the sea to Ægina. Even then there were some who were filled with a sense of foreboding whilst they looked, as I was looking, over the low-lying plain of Attica to where the Acropolis still shone yellow in the setting sun, though on the long grey line of Hymettus the purple light of evening was already beginning to gather.

## CHAPTER III

### LARISSA AND TEMPE

AT midnight the little steamer stopt off Laurium to land a tattered crowd of labourers who had come chiefly from Sparta in the hope of getting work at the old lead and silver mines, now that so many of the regular miners had been sent to the front in uniform. Early in the morning we were slowly making our way up the Euripus, between Eubœa and the Bœotian border, with the site of Eretria on our right. At Chalcis the tide was rushing violently through the narrows, just as in the old days when orators and poets used it as a stock metaphor for inconstancy. Beyond the swinging bridge lay the royal yacht Sphakteria, which had passed us in the night with the Crown Prince on board. In the afternoon, just as we turned to our right round the head of Eubœa, I saw a grey barrier of mountain

far up the colourless level of a loch, and at the foot of it lay the narrow strip of Thermopylæ. Towards sunset we entered the Pagasæan gulf with its memories of Jason and Achilles, and certainly the Argonauts might have sailed the world around and discovered no place so beautiful as the mountain tower from which the gleaming village of Trikeri watches over the channel leading to the Argonaut home. All the older villages along this coast, as on the coast of Epirus, are perched high up among the mountains, so that when the Turks or other pirates were seen creeping along the shore the villagers might have a few hours warning to make ready for defence. Such villages are scattered up and down along the sides of all the mountain promontory of Pelion, which shuts in the Gulf of Volo from the sea. Volo itself, being a modern town, is built close beside the beach, and was the real base of the Greek army in Thessaly till the Turks occupied it. As we slowly approached the lights of the port under a sky still magnificent with sunset, I saw a mass of



VALE OF TEMPE



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greenish-white glimmering far away to the north, and knew that it was Olympus.

Early next morning a little train on a single line of railway took us into the Thessalian plain. In all Greece it is by far the largest piece of land where ploughs may run level. Not nearly so fertile as the vineyard slopes between mountain and sea round Patras, or the orange and mulberry orchards of Sparta, it may still be called rich by courtesy. There are very few trees, and the long lines of reddish ploughed land or young green crops lie bare to the sun. It is the cornfield of the country, and in ordinary years thousands of labourers come over the hills from Macedonia or by ship from Constantinople to help with the harvest. Water is all that is wanted, and all the summer through the melting snows on Pindus, the mountain range which stretches right along the west border of the plain, keep pouring down an unlimited supply, but it is allowed to run away unused into the sea down the deep channel of the Peneus, or to stand at the foot of the hills in unwholesome marshes,

where the hideous black buffaloes soak their bare and knotty sides in the slime, or peer from the jungle of reeds with pale white eyes just tinged with blue. Honesty, a Dutch engineer, and the wages for cutting a few canals with sluices would increase the yield of the land at least fourfold, pay the German speculators off, and give Greece a reserve fund towards another effort on behalf of Crete and Epirus.

The train was crammed with stores and Reservists going to the front. Opposite me sat an Irregular, a servant of the secret National Society (Ethnike Hetairia), the first I had met, and for the first time I heard from him the standing story how a party of Irregulars had crossed the frontier the night before, surprised a Turkish block-house, and slaughtered all the soldiers together with the German officer in command. Instead of listening to so unlikely a rumour, I attempted to count the great Gras cartridges which were stuck in belts across his shoulders, and in several laps round his body. I got to about

three hundred and then tried to calculate the number I must allow for his back, but it seemed a waste of time when we were actually in Thessaly. We had just passed Velesino, where old Jason of Pheræ ruled in his tyranny, and beyond lay the low ridge of Cynocephalæ, where the phalanx of Macedon went down before the Roman line. Cipriani, the fighting anarch, was encamped there now with his Italians; and a little further off was Pharsalia. On the right, beyond a length of shallow lake, stood part of Pelion and further north the cone of Ossa, and then Olympus, its six small pointed summits now visible in brilliant white against the blue. And all around was Thessaly, that wild and dimly known region, the scene of strange tales of witchcraft, peculiar rites, abominations, and romantic passion.

Larissa, when we reached it, was struggling to do its best for the reception of the Crown Prince. He arrived a few hours after us. Some mountain batteries fired a salute, some infantry battalions lined the road, a cavalry escort remained mounted to their own satis-

faction, and the royal party drove to the little white-washed house which is called the palace. I wondered what the Princess, accustomed to the Potsdam reviews, thought of the display. But we all hoped the Turks might be worse still, and the people shouted for war, and the prisoners who had been allowed to clamber on to the prison wall and sit astride it with their guards showed their acquiescence in the course of events by spitting down upon the crowd at large. It was Monday, March 29th. A kind of instinct impelled me to make my way straight from that ceremonial across the bridge over the Peneus and carefully to examine the course of the river, which almost surrounds the northern side of the town, and the long, white road which runs straight northwest to Tyrnavos and the nearest point of the Turkish frontier. I could not foresee that in less than four weeks time the Greek army would be rushing back in causeless panic along that bit of road, and that the one event in the war which would stick in all men's minds would be the Crown Prince's departure from

that palace where I had just seen him lodged. Still, it was with some foreboding that I watched the pioneers lazily throwing up an amateur earthwork for guns by the castle at the highest point of the town, near the traces of the old Greek theatre; and wandered about the ramshackle streets, looking into the ruined mosques and minarets, and at the Jewish shops, and the Turkish mayor who marched the pavement as an emblem of the beneficence of the Greek rule. The next afternoon final instructions were given me to make my way along the frontier unless the war broke out, and then to use my own judgment, but to reach Arta over the mountains if possible. I was ready at once, for throughout the campaign I only carried a small canvas knapsack and a rug and waterproof with me, and Mavro had not much more, except a small camera—a tiresome and useless addition as it turned out, for the Turks captured nearly all his photographs, and finally the camera was broken when a pony and I rolled down a precipitous bank in the mountains.

It has been remarked of George Borrow that when a society sent him to distribute Bibles in Spain, he always found the Bibles were most wanted in exactly the places which he most wished to visit. And in the same way I, who for twenty years had wished to see Tempe, was now bound by duty to pass right through it. I was determined to traverse the frontier from sea to sea, and the Thermaic Gulf, or Gulf of Salonica, could only be reached through the Vale of Tempe, where the Peneus has found a passage from the plain between the roots of Olympus and Ossa. But for this outlet, Thessaly must have been a shallow inland sea, and it seems likely that in some age it was so. After jolting north-eastward over the dry water-courses, ploughed strips, and long wastes of pasture on the present surface for four or five hours under a burning sun, we reached Babà, the tiny village at the head of the gorge, and from there I walked down the road under the old giant plane-trees beside the Peneus, in hopes of reaching the sea. The river is about the size of the Severn at Shrewsbury, but even more

rapid, and thick brown with mud. It never runs dry, and that is such a marvel in Greece that it may partly account for the religious awe with which the valley was regarded. For Apollo was here, and there was a sacred path between this and his home in Delphi. The place has other history too; it was a passage for Macedonian hosts, and a few grey walls and towers, clinging to the rocks about half-way down the valley, perhaps reveal the hand of Rome. On each side of the stream the mountain cliffs rise to a great height in precipices. They are generally grey, and appear to be of the same kind of rock as Dovedale, but are more frequently tinged with a deep red. The Greek mountains are as a rule bare of trees, and that bareness gives them a peculiar dignity of outline and brilliancy of colour; but Tempe is fairly well wooded, chiefly by those immemorial planes and the dark ilex, that accursed tree which of all the things that grow was the only one to give its wood to make the cross of Christ. Apollo's laurel I did not find.

Beyond the gorge the deposit of the river has



formed a plain some five miles across, and climbing a mountain side I looked over it to the dark line of the sea. By clear daylight the promontory of Pallene, where Potidæa stood, must be quite visible from there, but it was getting dark, and I hurried along the plain till I came to the bridge, which had lately been broken in half by a flood. Clambering out across it as far as I could, I sat with my feet dangling over the rushing water, and tried to realise the military situation. It was obvious that with the help of pontoons either side might cross the frontier here, provided they also had command of the sea, and I assumed that Greece would retain that command and use it. I also assumed that directly war was declared the Greek fleet would pass the river's mouth along that dark line of sea and within a few hours attack Salonica and break the railway communication between Constantinople and both the Turkish armies in Macedon and Epirus. It turned out that I was entirely wrong, but why it turned out so is the main mystery of all the disastrous war. I could not foresee that part of the tragedy, still less did I

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know that the broken bridge where I sat was to give us the one touch of comedy in the following weeks. For it was by this bridge that Sir Ellis Ashmead Bartlett, M.P., intended to return to his friends in Turkey after his triumph with the army in Thessaly, but finding, much to his displeasure, that it was in ruins, he was obliged to put to sea from the river's mouth, and so was captured by a lurking man-of-war and carried off to Athens amidst the laughter of all mankind.

When I turned and re-entered the Vale, darkness had come. The white stars stood in the slip of sky between the cliffs, and up the mountain heights here and there, or close beside the river's bank, a red spark glimmered where some shepherd had lit his fire in the cave which sheltered him at night. Half-way up the gorge I came upon an old man slowly driving a bull along. He told me his two sons had been called up as Reservists for the army, and asked me if I met them in the war to give them his love and tell them he had bought that bull for 320 drachmæ (about £8). As he wanted the beast

to drag a plough over a patch of ground which he had reclaimed from the mountain, he would have to pay 7s. a year to the Government for the privilege of belonging to a nation which kept an army. For a milch cow the tax would have been about 1s. He told me further that he lived entirely on olives and a sort of paste made of Indian corn. He gave me some, and later on I became very familiar with it, and to me it always tasted as unwholesome as a City dinner, but different. As to his sons I never met them in the war, and I fear that long ago the bull has gone to plough for Turks.

I usually left Mavro behind on these unnecessary expeditions, for he was of a contemplative nature, and liked cooking and conversation. But now I met him on the road with the old man, and when we got back to our cottage we found all the villagers waiting in front of the door to ask us questions. As the shortest answer we produced an Athenian newspaper containing news that had been fairly fresh in London ten days before. The priest in his flowing black gown and tall hat (the brim round the top of the

crown) mounted the steps of the cottage and by the light of a flickering lamp read it aloud from end to end with an intonation distinctly religious. The people stood around absorbed in the words of destiny. There was no outcry here for war, and no place for paradox. To them the thing was very genuine, and from day to day they held their lives in their hands. Yet from day to day they went about their work as usual, for the old earth had to be dug, and the fruit trees were in perfect blossom.

Very early next morning we crossed the Peneus and climbed up into the mountains to the north of the valley. Between us we shared an old white pony with the patient look of that horse of Death which drags itself along so surely beside Albrecht Dürer's Knight. But its owner christened it many other things besides Death, and before we had ridden far I had nothing more to learn in one large department of the Greek language. In Babà itself church and mosque stand side by side like outposts on a frontier, and in a village over the river a muezzin from the minaret still cried at noon that Allah was the only God,

Turks were ploughing innocently in the fields, side by side with wild foresters who had come up to cut timber from Phthiotis. Over Tempe long thin wisps of white mist hung in air, far below us as we climbed upward some 2000 feet, till we suddenly descended into a steep valley, on the other side of which the large village of Rapsáni stands on a slope amidst mulberry trees and vineyards of reddish earth. For it lives on black wine and silk, and is reputed rich. It was now the headquarters of a colonel who commanded the frontier from the sea to Tyrnavos. I found him sitting with his officers in front of a rickety khan after the exertions of morning parade. He was stout, grey, and unshorn ; had fought his way up from the ranks by always volunteering for any fighting that was on hand, whether against Turk or brigand. With his men he was on grandmotherly terms, and when he was being photographed in the midst of his staff they all became pleasurably excited, like nice children, and now and then one of them would run up and pull his tunic straight or set him in a different attitude to display his figure

or uniform to better advantage. He was equally proud of them, and even kept the rations waiting whilst he drew them up in line for my inspection. There was a battalion of the Line and a few companies of Evzoni, the mountaineer troops, which are clad in the national dress of red cap, black and white jacket with white sleeves, white fustanella or kilt, and long white stockings to the top of their thighs. Their officers are dressed like ordinary officers of the Line, because a Greek officer may at any moment be changed from one regiment to another. Nothing more demoralising could be imagined. And in fact when the war came I found that even the company officers were as often as not entire strangers to their men. All ranks on this occasion went through their drill in their heavy blue great-coats, for in spite of the glorious heat it was still winter in Greece by military regulation.

The actual frontier was three hours further north than the village, along the top of a higher range. A little to the west is the height of Analepsis (Assumption) where the colonel told me the first blow of the war would probably be

struck ; and he was perfectly right. It is near the lake of Nezeros, which the Turks claimed after the war, and in fact they now hold all the positions round Rapsani. The soldiers told me at that time that the Turkish outposts were very friendly with them, and would call out "Don't mind us. We won't do you fellows any harm. Just tell us when you're coming and we'll run away." But I knew that was a Chinese manoeuvre, not a Turkish.

I was carried off to dinner by the Mayor, or to give him his true title, the Demarch of Olympus, a modest and interesting breeder of silk worms. The shady gallery in front of his resting room looked right over the edges of the Vale of Tempe to the slope of Ossa, and the sea was on the left. The house was new, for his old home had been burnt by the Turks in 1878, and he had to fight for the place again in 1886. For the first time, under his roof I observed the general etiquette that the wife and daughters of the host are supposed to be invisible, even when they come into the room, and perhaps whisper a word or two to the host himself, as

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country servants will sometimes do to their mistress in England. When I took my leave I found Evzoni stalking about the doorway, waiting to protect my return in front and rear. The colonel had before offered me an escort, and I had refused it with some amusement. I now entreated them to leave us alone and beguile the hours seated in the shade, as British privates use, but it was no good. Down they came the whole way into Tempe. With pride they asked me to examine their rifles. And they also showed me how they found cover in the low scrub of prickly oak which grows thick on the base of the mountains like holly bushes. The cover seemed sufficient indeed, but uncomfortable, being ill-suited to the peculiarities of the national uniform.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE FRONTIER PASSES

BEFORE dawn next morning, with the poor old beast like Death, we set off for Tyrnavos. An Evzonous came with us as escort and guide. There was no road, for I was determined to make straight for Tyrnavos westward, instead of dipping down through Larissa, the very name of which cast a peculiar depression over me, no doubt from the bad drill I had seen there. So we crept from point to point along the edge of the plain, keeping near the hills, till at last we came to Bakrina, a strange village, rather Italian than Greek in form. It is built in a large square, surrounded by a mud wall of defence. The filthy little mud huts of the working people stand against this wall inside. They have no windows, and the creatures who peered at us from the doorways looked as inhuman as a Central African tribe. In the

midst of the squalid expanse of the square stood a tall white house built in the style of modern France. It was the home of the man who owned the land and village and human livestock. But the shutters and doors were closed, for the master always lived in Athens. This resemblance to the English or Irish system of landowning made me feel quite at home, but as the labourers could not produce even a bit of bread for us amongst them, we passed on, and crossing the Peneus by a crazy boat, we reached some broad meadows, deep with grass, and starred with daisies and other field flowers. I think it was the only "turf" I ever saw in Greece. It was green: the sun lay brightly on it, and it smelt of rain. As we passed along the bushes and bits of hedge just bursting into leaf, a memory of English fields made me look for birds' nests, just as twenty years before we used to search the thickets along the Severn's banks. The meadows opened into a wide grassy space which I could have imagined to be an English common, had not a great black buffalo with protruding joints and retreating horns at

that moment raised his white eyes to mine, and so the illusion vanished.

Late in the afternoon we reached Tyrnavos, and were received with Greek hospitality by the Demarch, who was related to Mavro by ties of incalculable distance. His home, like most of the houses in the frontier towns, was rather Turkish than Greek. It stood within a large courtyard, with a high white wall round it. Eucalyptus and oleander and pomegranate trees filled the court with shade and brightness. The house was built with open lofts and cool reclining rooms, and long wooden galleries, with steps and unexpected doors—all made to be the very delight of a child. The lady Demarch was an Athenian lady of the world, knew Italian music, and spoke French. At all hours, even at breakfast time, she gave me food and made me tea, using a Russian samovar to boil the water, and putting the tea in a white vessel with the spout broken short on the top, while for a slop-basin she placed a soup-tureen on the floor. She lamented the want of book-learning which

prevailed in her town, and feared that I must notice some difference between the manners of Thessaly and London. I assured her that what difference I saw was entirely to the advantage of Thessaly, and, indeed, hardly even in other places in Greece have I been received with such unbounded trust and kindness. She gave me a room to myself, a strange medley of Paris and Teheran. I well remember the bed in it, for it was the last I was to sleep in for some weeks. And on the bed lay a small night-shirt, thickly embroidered down the front with semi-barbaric designs in red and blue. I thought it only polite to wear it, but, catching sight of myself unexpectedly in a glass, I instinctively put the candle out and crept into bed in the dark.

When the war came the Turks plundered and destroyed that beautiful house, and the family was left penniless. I met them again in Athens, starving with some pretence at decency in a bare garret, and I am ashamed to say that out of stupid politeness I hesitated to give them the money they needed

to help them to live a week or two longer.

Even when I was with them in Tyrnavos, the family was already much alarmed at their situation, for Tyrnavos was obviously the first town that would suffer if the Greek troops were driven back from the frontier. Unhappily for Greece, the mountain range which the boundary follows dips southward far into the plain beside the town, and exposes it to an easy flank attack from the west. The Greek and Turkish block-houses along the top of the hills can be seen hardly more than a mile or so away, and, what is worse, within an easy two miles walk the heights are interrupted by a broad valley, through which the river Xerias makes its way past Tyrnavos into the Peneus from the plain of Ellassona, where the Turks had their headquarters. Like most rivers in Greece, even in April it was as dry and sandy as Sahara, and could be used almost as a high road across the frontier if once the hills were held on either side the valley. It is most probable that it was by this way the

Persian host streamed into Thessaly of old. Still more threatening to the ill-fated town was the famous Melouna pass, which runs almost straight to Ellassona northward and crosses the frontier by an easy mountain gap. From the top one looked over a little plain with a straight white road across it, and at the end of the road stood Ellassona itself, the great Turkish camps neatly spread out in rows of white tents, like wings, on the low hills at either side. The Turkish block-houses on the pass and at the mouth of the Xerias valley are only a few yards from the Greek.

It was the first time I had seen Turkish soldiers. Most of them were brown looking fellows with fine features, and I was told that many had been brought from Asia and the Persian borders. They were dressed in the fez, dirty brown jackets, trousers variegated and patched, generally of a very civilian cut, and slippers. They were armed with Martini rifles of a cheap quality, but newer than the Greek Gras. In Epirus a good many had Maüser rifles, and with a little practice one

could distinguish the different note, as each of the three kinds gave tongue. The officers in the passes were smart and soldierly men, fairly well turned out. Greeks and Turks used to glower at each other through field glasses at about fifty yards range, with considerable interest on both sides. As to the general condition and supply of the Turkish army, the most contradictory rumours reached us from the few traffickers who managed to come across the border. Some, probably to please us, said they had never seen such human misery; the men had neither food, clothes, nor discipline. Several Greek officers firmly believed the Turkish camps were practically empty, and the trumpets we heard were blown for a show. Other messengers, again, gave reports nearer the truth. At Melouna I watched the rations issued to the Turks in the block-house. They were entirely of boiled rice. The Greek officer told me that only the afternoon before a Turk had killed his comrade in a quarrel over a bit of bread, such a pleasing variety in the daily round.

I cannot say whether the story was true, but a little way down the hillside I saw the newly piled grave—the first grave on that terrible pass where so many men, who then ate and talked with me, are now left rotting.

At the foot of the road which the Greeks were then making up the gap (for the Turks to come down, as it turned out), a major kindly asked me to see him drill a full battalion of Evzoni. They were divided into four large companies, hard and browned fellows all, moving quickly and with much solicitude to please, but continually whispering and pulling each other right, like eager boys on parade. The officer had a bad word of command, preached at his men, and kept waving his sword about to emphasise his lessons. "They are soldiers of Leonidas!" he proudly said to me after the drill. And the poor fellows were certainly brave enough in themselves, as far as bravery went.

For rations the Greek soldiers at this time drew two pounds of bread, half a pound of meat, and soup and cheese every day; except

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on the two fast days of the week when they had haricot beans in the soup instead of meat. They were paid nine drachmæ a month—say one shilling a week, and out of that they supplied themselves with tobacco, curdled sheep's milk for breakfast, and the Greek resined wine, which to unaccustomed lips tastes like a mildly intoxicating furniture polish, but with the habit of years is found to be better than champagne. The canteen was generally the local khan, but sometimes enterprising shepherds stretched a brilliantly striped rug over three sticks, pegged down the corners, and under that tent displayed a few olives, an egg or two, some milk and a wooden flask of wine. After dinner the mountaineer Evzoni joined hands and revelled in their national dance. In three parts of a large circle they moved slowly round and round, making a regular step with their slippered feet and tufted toes as in a very deliberate Irish jig. The leader was attached to the next man by a handkerchief in the left hand, and pirouetted, or crouched on his heels, and then bounded into

the air, apparently as his own sense of fitness might prompt. Meantime they sang a melancholy song, full of twirls and quavers, that howled upon the wind. It was repeated over and over again till someone clamoured for a change. The song I heard at Melouna ran on the ominous words: "If you are still unwed, my boy, don't get married this year. This year there will be war and insurrection: this year mothers will weep for their sons, and wives for their husbands. This year the captain's lover will be weeping for the captain."

I do not know whether it was the melancholy song or the melancholy drill, but I was cast down and disquieted as I set off for a lonely walk back to Tyrnavos. I passed several knots of soldiers, and a whole camp by a copious spring which bubbled up from the foot of the hills like the Aire at Malham Cove, or the waters of Maglan in the Val de Cluse. They were making their suppers, and washing their things more earnestly than if they were to live for ever. It seemed as though life were fairly secure, and it was still worth while to

toil for happiness. Heavy rain had fallen, but the storm had passed away, and the air was full of the sweetness of the earth. The upper sky was calm, barred with thin lines of white and gold. Far away in the south Parnassus stood out clear, but Ossa and Pelion were hidden in a blind curtain of rain, and the purple drifts of cloud which hung whirling round the snows of Olympus would suddenly divide, and reveal far within them mysterious glimpses of orange and red resting in stationary masses upon the summit. The lower mountains stood distinct with deep shadows of blue, and in front lay the plain streaked with long flashes of almost violent green where the sunlight fell upon the rising corn. Amidst that scene I spent so long a time distributing tobacco to the men, and trying to make them understand ancient Greek, that before I reached Tyrnavos, Orion was on his march again.

Next morning we started for Trikkala. The road follows the roots of the hills as they trend southward till they reach the Peneus at a point called Gounitsa. From there the third danger-

ous pass across the frontier—the pass of Revéni—winds northward till it emerges into the Turkish plain not far from the further end of the Xerias valley. It appeared to be very strongly held with artillery, infantry, and earthworks. But as a matter of later history, it was the capture of this passage by the Turks, which so completely outflanked the Greek positions at Tyrnavos, that the Greeks were compelled to retire, and in their retirement were overcome by the disastrous panic which drove them to Larissa, and from Larissa southward, about a fortnight after my visit. It was easy to see that this was a most critical point for defence or attack, since the frontier here reaches its southernmost point, and afterwards gradually turns away to the north-west. I accordingly returned to this district for the day on which Greece celebrates her Independence (April 6th), since some thought that war might then break out. But as it happened to be a Tuesday, others told me there was little danger. For it is an ill-omened day with all Greeks since that fatal Tuesday four hundred and forty-five years

ago, when Constantinople fell to the Turks.\* I stayed with a gentle old farmer in the large village of Zarkos, and spent the day seated on the top of Koutra hill, or on its neighbour, Mount Elias, watching the frontier in both directions for miles, and spying at the Turks who stood to arms all day, drawn up in front of their tents. But nothing happened. The Greek officers rode from station to station, adjuring the men to retain their self-control, and remember they were an army now, and not brigands and insurgents as in the old wild days.

When it was too late for further danger, I yielded to the petitions of a magnificent brown shepherd who had followed me about day and night, imploring me to relax my activity, and grant him the glory of giving me hospitality. He was a true epic king, a pastoral Achilles, still young, and one of the most splendid men I had then seen. He conducted me to his palace, a large bee-hive of wattled rods, in the midst of twenty or thirty others, all of them surrounded by a high wattled fence to keep

\* May 29th, 1453.

off the wolves at night. The encampment stood on the green slope of a mountain side, looking over the Peneus. The lamb had already been slaughtered, a long wooden stake was now run through it lengthways, as is the mode, and it was turned slowly round and round by hand over a fire of wood embers. Meanwhile the lesser chieftains crowded round, full of delight at seeing me, eager to please, and endlessly inquisitive. But the women stood aloof, and nothing could conciliate their savagery. One old creature, brown and wrinkled as Fate, drove all the children together into a hut, and planted herself in the doorway, lest they should even peer out, and be blasted by the evil eye. When the lamb was roasted, it was split up into lumps, and laid in a heap in our midst, the head being cleft in half and set on the top. I began, and took what I liked,—I think it was half the saddle,—but during the meal the king and minor chiefs picked out the daintiest parts—the tongue, the brain, the eyes—and sent them up to me on their forks. It is hard to refuse

at a giant's feast, and for the sake of our common humanity I did what I could, but I sometimes wished some of my more cultured friends had been with me to enjoy their share in such ungrudging hospitality.

As the traveller approaches Trikkala in Lent, he is beset at every village by all the little girls, who demand pence as their right, chanting at the same time a peculiar and unintelligible song, which I take to be the remnant of an ode to Aphrodite. For by immemorial custom they store up any pence they get against their wedding day; and Lent has nothing to do with weddings, but spring has a good deal. I should suppose that a really industrious girl who met every carriage and each of the two trains, and was pretty besides, and wore her brilliant little rags to advantage, might perhaps hoard nearly a pound for her dowry. But in this year of war travellers were more plentiful than usual, and so for about the next ten or fifteen years to come the dowries may reach a guinea.

Trikkala is a rather larger place than

Tyrnavos, and even more picturesque, though not so Turkish in construction. A clear stream runs through it, and on a low hill stands an ancient Byzantine fortress with long curtain walls. Some ten miles away towards the west runs the stupendous barrier of Pindus without a break, its peaks shaped like crystals and gleaming with snow. I said without a break, and yet there is one sudden gap reaching down almost to the level and leading up to obscure heights beyond, almost incessantly swept by storms. I knew at once it was the Portais—the gates by which alone the central Pindus might be entered and crossed, though few went that way. Wherever I walked my eyes seemed to be fixed upon that misty gorge. I knew perfectly well it was by that path I should go; and yet I tried all manner of other ways of reaching Epirus first. Among others I formed the really crazy scheme of crossing into Turkey further up the range at Metsovo and working round to Arta through Janina. In ordinary times it would have been the easiest road, and of the highest interest. But just on the edge



of the war as we were, it is as nearly certain as can be that I should not have come through alive, or at the best I should have been kept a prisoner by the Turks, till the war was over. For the Sultan did not approve of the *Daily Chronicle's* policy on the Eastern Question. And, therefore, I am really grateful to the Turkish Consul at Trikkala for steadily putting every possible obstacle in my way, from the question of passports downwards. Rather than let me go, I believe he would have lent me all the twenty volumes of abomination called "Monstres Parisiens" which composed his library, to keep me quietly occupied where I was. And so through those mountain Gates, as from the first I had foreseen, I was in the end destined to pass.

But the interval of waiting and uncertainty was trying. The town was crammed with soldiers, always on the move. Reservists kept flocking into the town, in ragged labouring clothes, or the white frieze cloaks of shepherds, carrying their bits of comfort in bowls and handkerchiefs. They were fitted with uniforms,

but the caps gave out, and the men went about in straw hats and wideawakes, like volunteers at Aldershot. No civilian crossed a street without taking his rifle and winding 150 cartridges round his stomach. In their impatience for blood, they began practising at any mark. They even fired at the sacred stork, though, to be sure, plenty of storks still remained about. So the whole place was full of confusion and excitement.

My uncertainty as to my future course, combined with increasing distrust of the Greek drill, makes my memory of that beautiful town rather dreary. I seem to have lived there for weeks meditating on the vanity of human wishes, but in fact I only slept there five nights, irregularly distributed between the 3rd and 18th April. And I ought to have been cheerful enough, for almost every evening I spent with one of the most charming comrades that even the Greek army supplied. He was a Cambridge undergraduate, I think of Trinity Hall, and loved the university life; but most of all he loved a glorious day with the Pytchley

hounds across the English fields. Yet he had come back to help his country in her need, and was now serving as an ordinary lance-corporal in a squadron of cavalry stationed at Trikkala. I suspect he was almost the only horseman in the Greek army, for, as Odysseus said of his Ithaca, Greece is good for goats, but bad for horses. I have never seen so quixotic and blind a patriotism in any human being. He appeared to shine with it. The zeal of his cause had eaten him up. He longed and prayed for the war. "You see!" he kept saying to me, "it will be another affair of China and Japan. You and I will gallop into Constantinople side by side." He rode as light as his heart, and I well remember watching him dash off towards Zarkos, his eyes glowing with joy, the morning that the war began. Whether he survived the disasters of the following days I am not sure, and hardly know whether to hope it.

Though he offered me a share of his tiny bedroom, I lay on the floor of a dreary room in another house, and night after night anxiety kept me awake. On entering I had half

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noticed a bird hanging in a cage in the passage, and in the middle of my first night there a voice at the door began to speak in long, clear notes, as of unutterable sorrow. I sat up and listened, and to my mind there came the memory of Surrey woods brimming over with the sound of a voice like that, but then how different in its ecstasy of joy! It was for woods like those and a joy as high that the caged bird was crying with such passion. I saw the scene again:—

The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild ;  
White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine ;  
Fast-fading violets cover'd up in leaves ;  
And mid-May's eldest child  
The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,  
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.

Other notes than those long cries of yearning lamentation the bird seldom uttered, but now and again I just heard a sad attempt at the deep gurgle which is often the prelude to the perfect song. So he kept calling all night long, till with the first dawn I saw through my window the tops of Pindus begin to redden behind the minaret of a ruined mosque, and the numerous storks who had piled their family

mansions in an enormous plane-tree outside welcomed the light with prolonged rattling of their bills. In their peculiar way they thus expressed their satisfaction in the good citizenship of daily life and domestic affection. But the nightingale was silent then.

## CHAPTER V

### WITH MONKS IN AIR

ON April 7th, the morrow of Independence Day, I made an early start from Trikkala, being determined to discover for myself whether the Irregulars were really intent upon the enterprises of which they spoke so much. I had met several of their leaders, and I thought from their manner that at last there was something in the wind. At all events, some thousands of them were known to be slowly making their way northward up the valley of the Peneus from Trikkala towards the frontier, and it was reported they had now reached Kalambaka, which is the terminus of the little Thessalian railway from Volo. At Kalambaka I learnt that the force had split into three parties, and had vanished in the night, no one knew where, or, rather, everybody knew a different direction. As Kalambaka was the

last telegraph station, I resolved to wait there and see what would happen.

The village is just at the top angle of the Thessalian plain, where the Peneus issues from the mountains. It stands close to the foot of almost ludicrously perpendicular pillars and cliffs of some grey rock, which looks to the unlearned as though it had been ground and worn by ages of glacier work. The cliffs stand thus in isolated masses, rising, I suppose, at times to about 2000 feet for some miles around, and the whole region is like a drunken giant's dream of home, or a crazy jumble of all Leonardo's backgrounds. On the most grotesquely inaccessible points monasteries have been built these five hundred years, partly for safety, but chiefly, it is said, as a display to God of religious zeal, and as a refuge from all things feminine. Being hung between heaven and earth, they are called Meteora—places, as the poet might say,

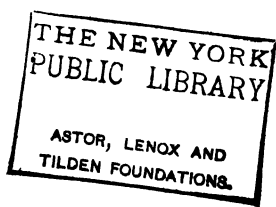
Where monks a-dream, in meteoric homes  
Suspended, view the far Thessalian plain.

I do not know how many monasteries once



A MONASTERY IN METEORA WITH THE PENEUS AND PART OF PINDUS





were there. Almost wherever you look you catch sight of remnants of some little hermitage or perching place in an absurd cave or crevice up the face of the rock. It is all like an inland Mount Athos. But most of the monasteries are ruined and empty now. They can be reached only by birds, and the marvel grows upon one how the first builders ever got up. The exploits of the Alpine Club pale beside the agility of those early religious climbers. And even when the height was reached at last, all the building material must have been carried up the cranky lengths of upright ladders, which, in some cases, still hang rotting in space. I think, in England, some homœopathic company would repair them all, and advertise the district as a health resort for nervous people.

The richest and most accessible of the monasteries is St Stephen's, which stands sheer above Kalambaka on the south-west corner of the cliffs. Fetching a wide compass, and following a track brilliant with flowers and the purple blossoms of a small tree which brightens all the lower valleys in spring like a flowering

almond, we reached the entrance from the mountain behind by crossing a little draw-bridge over a profound chasm. A boy's face peered through a hole, and soon the Archimandrite, in robes of decent black and a sacred hat, came out and received us in person, with offers of all hospitality that the Lenten season permitted. Inside, the solemn conventual buildings stood around an irregular courtyard, with wooden galleries and deep-set doors. Under a rough-hewn colonnade of stone hung the ancient wooden gong for prayers. I could not but marvel at the skill of the early masons who had built the outer walls into the living rock, so that they rose flush with the face of the very precipice, and a jump from some of the windows would have taken one straight down on to the trees or cottage roofs hundreds of feet below. The whole place was pervaded with the quiet beauty which comes of solid building and cleanly rooms absolutely unadorned.

For the rest of the day we wandered through that unimaginable region from monastery to

monastery, but we ascended only to St Barlaam's height. Standing at the foot of the cliff there we shouted, and presently saw a little thread appear high in air with something at the end. It came slowly down, and we found it was a sufficient rope, with a large net-work bag hanging by an iron hook. We crept into the bag, laced up the top, and shouted again. With a jerk and a swing we began to ascend, our arms and legs sticking out through the large meshes like the heads and tails of fishes in a net. At the top we were hauled in by two shaggy monks and dumped upon the floor beside the windlass. Having seen the dark chapel, the astonishing galleries built out over the verge, and a monk of immemorial years, whose eyes had gone as white as a buffalo's, and whose shrivelled skin already seemed to let the skeleton through, we were again laced up in the bag, and never did I realise the full force of the phrase "launched into eternity" till one of those uncombed monks, his brown flesh apparent through his raiment at unexpected intervals, kicked me off into space

from the scaffold, and we went spinning down and ever round. The interest of the situation was further increased, because I had discovered that he was none other than the local idiot, attached to the monastery in accordance with a frequent and kindly custom, and given the control of the windlass because he was thought incapable of any more distinctly religious office.

We got back to St Stephen's in time for one of the evening services, chanted by a monk or two and some boys in a quavering whine or howl, closely akin to the national music. Both, I believe, are merely heritages of the untuneful Turk. The effect on the service was that it made the words entirely unintelligible even to Mavro, who was brought up in the faith. As usual, the chapel was crowded with Greek soldiers, for the approach of the war made all the army very careful of religious observance. After service all went up to kiss the holy pictures painted upon the deeply carved altar screen. The relics of the monastery were also produced, I think in my honour. Under a slip of glass could be seen a round inch of the skull

of St. Nicholas the Second, and a few of St Chrysostom's perished finger joints. Who St Nicholas the Second was, I could not learn, but all present crowded to kiss the glass plate over his bit of bone. Their mother-tongue was Greek, but they kissed those poor relics of death and went away comforted. The monastic chapels were fairly free from the horrors which defile most of the Secular churches. Not even in Southern Germany have I seen anything more disgusting than the scenes painted round the old church at Kalambaka, at the foot of the precipices—the souls of men and children, but chiefly of women, all in torment, their flesh rent with pincers and branded with fire, their limbs devoured by monstrous fish and beasts of terrific blends—such loathly fancies as the poor human race has invented to add to their fears and unhappiness in the world, as though their fears and unhappiness of themselves were not enough. These tortures are watched by painted saints in jewels and gold upon the panels, and deities in fresco upon the roofs—works of many a “Pictor Ignotus,” whose name no Ruskin will

ever save from oblivion now. Of the spiritual life which used to be regarded as the essential heart of religion in England and Scotland, I never found the smallest trace in the Greek Church; but whether its absence was entirely due to the ordained ritual, I could not be quite certain.

Over our Lenten dinner of octopus stewed in leeks (a dish which tasted like a line of Aristophanes), I tried with Mavro's help to get the Archimandrite to discuss the position and prospects of the Orthodox Church, and the importance of its differences from Rome on points of metaphysic and ritual. But we did not get very far. I think the priest was unaware that metaphysics existed, and was rather dubious about the Church of Rome as well. Besides, the poor man was overcome at the loss of two oxen, the very leaders of his team, without which all the rest were useless for the plough. The government had killed them to feed the soldiers, and in return had given him a paper promise to pay. He had faith in the government, but could he

plough his field with a paper promise? Would the oxen follow it if you held it before their noses? The oxen looked back, and would not move, lowing for their leaders in vain. I still often think of that priest's sorrows and his entire indifference to frivolous doctrinal disputations. Kalambaka was never actually occupied by the Turk in the war, but I am afraid one might now buy that paper promise cheap.

Before sunrise I looked from my deep-set window sheer down and away over the sleeping plain, all brown and uncertain still in the tender light, though the far-off mountains were just tinged with red. As the sun appeared, a thin veil of mist spread itself over the plain and, remaining motionless for an hour or two, then vanished. A boy stood in the corridor ready to pour water over my hands, which is the recognised Greek form of washing. All was very still—the stiller that now and again the chapel bell sounded. Then we took our leave. Mavro had warned me that I should be expected to kiss the Archimandrite's hand.



It seemed to me an easy task, for the man was decent and gentle. So I merely told Mavro to give me a lead and I would follow. Mavro delivered a little speech of thanks I had made for him, presented my thank-offering, and got over the kissing without a check. Then I came boldly on, seized the hand, but at the moment something invincible arose within me, I jibbed aside, shook the hand cordially, and got away as best I could. "We don't do that sort of thing in the Buffs," I murmured in my own excuse, remembering the words of the immortal Private, who was beheaded for refusing to kiss a mandarin's foot. But the cases were not really parallel.

As we descended from the heights the monasteries were standing around us, clear and still upon their monstrous precipices. Up the steep path great herds of goats were climbing amid the tinkling of innumerable bells, whilst now and then a shepherd girl urged them on with shouts. The bright morning air and the brilliant snow of Pindus across the valley, all told of peace. Yet that day for the first time I was to see the shedding of blood and to hear the cries of the wounded.

## CHAPTER VI

### WITH THE IRREGULARS

It was Friday, April 9th. When I got down to Kalambaka, my first inquiry was for news of the Irregulars, but nothing had been heard. Some said that they were ten hours over one mountain, others said seven hours over another. I determined at once to strike almost due north from the village to a point where I guessed, from the look of the mountains, the frontier might be crossed without much difficulty. With the help of the Commanding Officer of the district, a cordially benevolent old gentleman, who had risen from the ranks, I procured two horses, and started in pursuit, keeping up the east bank of the Peneus at first and then following the large tributary which joins it at right angles from the north, where the main stream issues from a narrow valley on the west.

Ever since I came to Greece I had heard

a lot about these Irregulars — *Antartai*, as the Greeks call them (pronounced *Andarti*). The word merely means Insurgents, and can be derived easily enough from ancient Greek. It was the natural name for the patriots of insurrection in the days when Greece was still at the Turk's mercy. And the traditions of the kind of warfare which was then the only possible, had, unfortunately, remained firmly fixed in the Greek mind, and constantly threatened to infect the whole of the regular army. As to their numbers, the figures given me at the beginning of the war were monstrous, but it so happened that, one way and another, I was thrown very much with them, and I must have seen between eight and ten thousand, or even more. In all there cannot have been less than 15,000, and I think not more than 20,000; but that is merely conjecture. To number them was impossible, for every Greek in the land had a rifle and cartridges, and would go out as an Irregular on his own basis if he saw a chance of putting in a shot now and then. But the genuine



GREEK IRREGULARS

and as far as I could understand a man might leave his company and attach himself to another without remark. Higher grades of command were said in some cases to be filled by retired officers from the regular army, but I only heard of one genuine instance. The enemies of Greece constantly assert that the whole force was under regular Greek officers, but that is absolutely untrue. There was not a single Greek officer connected with it. Most of the men were supplied with a little black silk cap, embroidered with a gold cross and the letters E. E. (Ethnike Etairia) on each side, with a small blue circle underneath. That was their only uniform, but practically all of them wore the loose grey cloak of the shepherds, when they could get one, the petticoat or fustanella, well greased with fat and oil to keep off the damp and lice, and the long white stockings of the common national dress. The society supplied rifles and cartridges, and was supposed to pay through the captain for rations and all necessities. But directly action began, the whole system completely broke down. The

men either starved or lived upon the peasants, and on doles from the pitiful.

Riding slowly up the valley we kept along a fairly visible tract beside the river, which was running, like an Indian river, in a number of variable streams over a wide expanse of stones, interspersed with wooded islands. After some miles we reached a rude Khan where we found some thirty poor Italian boys crawling back from the front, shivering with fever, crippled with cold, sick to death with hunger and bad food. They had come over with Cipriani, intending to join the foreign battalion of the regular army, but their leader had not allowed that, and now they were vaguely talking of going to Crete, but in reality they were drifting to the nearest hospital in the few thin rags in which they had left their careless homes. One of them was delirious and apparently dying. We gave them all the food we had, and even parted with our flannel shirts—a mere “coxcombrary of charity” for which we suffered bitterly all the rest of the campaign.

A little further on we came to an open clearing marked by heaps of grey ashes and blackened logs, showing that here a large body of Andarti had pitched for the night. We then forded the river and began to climb into the mountains on our left, working steadily upwards through a sub-Alpine region more like Switzerland than Greece, and fairly grown with pines. Now and again a long, narrow valley would reveal for a while the great snowy masses of the central range to the west, but our course was still northward. There was a sense of rumour in the air. From the few peasants who were to be seen with their goats, I constantly heard the Greek word for war. At last, just as we had climbed a height from which the whole frontier eastward could be traced right away to Olympus over the plain of Ellassona, we met an elderly gentleman riding back in much haste and excitement. I recognised him as a rich Athenian lawyer who was one of the chief paymasters to the Secret Society. "It has begun! we are killing hundreds!" he cried. "You are pleased!"

I answered, knowing that no greater disaster could have befallen Greece than such a beginning.

At the same moment I heard the sound of firing far away. I dismounted (for almost anything could go quicker than a Greek horse) and ran forward till at last I reached the dismal village which, for its desolation, is called Kakoplevra. But the deep blue evening was already falling fast, and the fighting was over for that day. On the other side of the village I met several of the wounded slowly coming in, howling terribly, poor fellows, as they stumbled along the rocky track. There was no ambulance of any kind, and the blood was dripping through the bits of petticoat and stocking with which they had tried to bandage themselves up. Behind them with an armed party came a string of nine Turkish prisoners who had been surprised in the first block-house assaulted. They were now lodged in the village school for the night to teach them manners, and next day they were handed over to the Commanding



Officer at Kalambaka, who returned them with apologies to Constantinople.

It appeared that against the express orders of the regular officers, some 2000 Andarti had crossed the frontier that day, burnt a few out-lying block-houses, and were now besieging the main Turkish station, a few hours' climb from Kakoplevra. As it was impossible to go farther, I spent that night with a peasant, who kindly invited me to his cottage. There was a stable for horses and goats underneath, and the upper floor (which was level with the ground on one side owing to the slope of the hill) was divided by a low partition between the hay loft and the living-room. The peasant, who was a tall and singularly handsome man, had married at eighteen, because, as he said, he wanted somebody to help him with the digging. His wife, a good-tempered woman, cross-eyed, and perfectly frightful from overwork, went waddling about the place like a she-bear or Esquimaux. They had a pretty girl of fourteen, two boys, a suckling, two cats, and a lot of chickens living with them in the same room; and the pig, a nice

long-haired creature, ran in and out whenever he felt inclined for warmth and society. There was no furniture of any kind, but we all squatted round the burning logs heaped in the middle of the floor, and chewed the sticky paste of half-baked maize, tempered by a peculiar wine which was brought up from a hole in the floor to do me honour. The smoke escaped as best it could, but left great festoons of soot hanging just to the level of our heads. Fortunately the two tiny windows had no glass, though one was covered with a bit of muslin. When supper was over, we arranged ourselves in two rows along the mud floor, and lay down in our clothes without further fuss. The suckling wailed, the chickens clucked, the cats howled, the woman snored, the horses sighed, the pig grunted inquisitively, and we all enjoyed a good mediæval kind of night together.

At the first glimmer of dawn the girl crept over her parents and the rest of the family to pour water over my hands down through a hole upon the horses' noses below. All the family sat up in their places to see how I washed, for

I had a bit of soap with me. Then we all had some more wine and sticky maize, and by half-past five were climbing up a terrible mountain path to the north-west. Deep snow had fallen in the night, and when we reached the level scraps of pasture on the mountain heights it was above our ankles. Again I heard the sound of firing, much louder now, and plunging forward I came upon three Andarti on guard over a large store of ammunition in the hollow of a wood. Running up the next mountain side, I found from its long and pine-covered crest that the whole of the Turkish frontier lay at my feet with a view far away into the Macedonian hills. Somewhere close by, the ancient health resort of Phonika must have stood. But I had no thought of looking for its ruins, for just below me, on an isolated knoll in the midst of the wretched village of Baltino, stood a large white guard-house, from which smoke was issuing in puffs. Hastening down the hill, I found swarms of Andarti in excited and unorganised bands, running round the house at about four hundred yards' distance, shouting to each other,

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and firing at the windows from behind rocks whenever they felt inclined. Their fire had no effect beyond spoiling the whitewash, which kept dribbling down in little flakes, and in despair some of them were urging their officers to lead them to the assault with the bayonet-point. That, in fact, was the only thing to be done, but the leaders were afraid of the inevitable loss of life, and so the futile firing continued.

In the guard-house 129 Turks and two officers were besieged. During the snowstorm in the night they had attempted a sortie at a point where the Andarti had purposely lighted no fires, but they had been driven in again. Now they were keeping up an occasional fire from the loop-holes, and at times a few of them would creep out to a better position and volley with the utmost coolness. So the firing went on hour after hour without ceasing. The Andarti kept gathering into ragged knots for conference, and I thought that something definite was going to happen, but in another minute they had scattered again without result. Whilst I was with them about ten retired

wounded, and in the whole affair six were killed, among whom was Makris, one of their captains, to whom death had come as he lay asleep at night under the trees, and a stray bullet just dropped into his brain.

At noon the position was unaltered. But just as I was obliged to turn back so as to reach the telegraph at Kalambaka, I heard firing in the distance on the right and left, and knew that the Turkish reinforcements were trying to approach. That day they failed to reach the spot, but it made little difference, for in the next night but one the whole Turkish garrison escaped during another tremendous snowstorm. The report spread that the Christian women of Baltino had gone up in pity and exchanged clothes with the Turkish soldiers, but I think that story originated merely in the old Greek talent for composing beautiful myths and then believing in them. On my way back to Koko-plevra we passed within a few hundred yards of another Turkish block-house high up in the hills. The garrison was all alert, and in front of it we espied a smart little officer apparently

contemplating the magnificent view over the long ranges to Olympus. At sight of him the three Andarti, who were with me at once made rests for their rifles by driving their long knives deep into the fir trees, judged the distance carefully, and fired. I protested they could not hit at the range, and that it was useless murder if they did; but I might as well have protested to a boy with a new catapult when he sees a cat. From the top of a rock I watched the effect through my glass, and saw the officer just turn his head and give an order to three Turks, who at once lay down and fired; nor did I realise that I was myself their only visible mark till the three bullets whizzed past. Then I sought cover, like the rest, and the absurd incident ended.

When we got back to Kalambaka late that evening our news was received with the greatest regret by the regular army, and though the Andarti always showed themselves kindly and honourable to me, I was glad to be back once more among the good-humoured Evzoni giants. The colonel gave me shelter in their barracks,

and till late at night I sat with them whilst in a little courtyard they danced their endless circling dance, singing as they went the Odyssean refrain: "Why do you go to wash clothes in the river? Why do you leave me to wash clothes in the river? Dear heart of my soul, take me with you as well as the clothes when you go to wash in the river." And above the black and gigantic precipices around the village hung the half-moon, sharp as a sword, whilst a rushing drift of snow-clouds whirled from Pindus across the depths of sky.

Feeling sure that the next piece of fighting would take place somewhere just west of Baltino, I set off early on April 12th to reach that district by a different route. The importance of Kalambaka is that it stands at the mouth of the difficult but only practicable pass over the range of Pindus to Metsovo and Janina, the capital of Turkish Epirus. This must have been the way that Cæsar came in that strategic movement of stupendous daring when he left all his communications, and with a victorious enemy behind him struggled across the moun-

tains from the Epirote coast into Thessaly and the Pharsalian plain. At Kalambaka he succeeded in rejoining his corps under Calvinus. And it was by this ancient pass that I had intended to penetrate to the headquarters of the Turkish army at Janina if only the Turkish consul had not continually interposed objections and delays. I was now pleased to find that as usual duty led me in the very direction I most wished to follow, for the track runs beside the course of the Peneus up a deep valley to its very source in the snows of Pindus, and after my long companionship with the river I naturally wished to visit its birthplace.

From Kalambaka the path at once crosses the bed of the river, which is here a parched desert of loose stones nearly a mile broad. Over the main channel there is a light bridge, but when once the deep valley running up westward is entered, the river has to be forded. I think I forded it ten times within the first five or six hours. The water was rushing with the violence of a glacial stream, but was much clearer than the Swiss torrents, and happily it never quite



reached a horse's broadside. At first the banks were sloping hills, leading gently down from the great mountains behind. They were sprinkled with the brilliant greens of spring—the young willow, the oak, and the plane. On the thin grass were flowers of greater variety than in England, but not so profuse—anemones scarlet and purple, white primroses, violets, a sort of clustered squills, the large bulb of which is stewed in oil and eaten as a bitter salad, and a bough or two of English may, which is better than rosemary for remembrance. Now and then a thrush sang, and a ground lark. The crested lark was very common, but in all this part of Greece I only heard the skylark once. All through the firing at Baltino a cuckoo had called persistently. Hoopoes flitted about in their spasmodic flight, there were plenty of hawfinches, and the goldfinches were building in the bushes of prickly oak. Innumerable jays screamed from the trees, hooded crows were common, and hawks of many kinds. One, a beautiful white creature with deep black tips to its wings, haunted the cliffs at Kalambaka, but

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I have often seen it on the rough plain of Attica as well. In the sky three or four splendid eagles were constantly circling wide, or sailing far away into distance without a movement of their wings. Snakes and vipers in plenty shot hissing through the grass. There were countless lizards, the finest being a gorgeous thing of sparkling green nearly two feet long. And under almost every bush a cautious rustling revealed where some tortoise was lumbering along his way, anxious to marry, but not to marry in haste.

On the northern bank the mountains were dark red, like so much of the glorious earth of Greece, and a good deal of spruce fir was growing. All the region of Pindus in fact supplies timber for the rest of Greece, but the beauty of the spruce is spoilt by a caterpillar which strips the needles and builds great nests of white web a foot or two long at the ends of the branches. It is hairy and reddish brown, about two inches in length, and it moves to a new nest with its companions in line, head to tail, without the smallest break, along the ground. I measured

strings of them five or six feet long in almost perfectly straight lines. How they learnt their strategy, why they alone should practise it, how their leader is appointed or knows his way, I have not discovered. The Greeks think they never turn into moths but are doomed to be worms for ever—the Wandering Jews of insects. But the moth is in fact common enough in its season—a fat and fluffy thing like the English tussock. Higher up in the mountains I noticed that the caterpillar never attacks the firs above the snow-line; I suppose because the parties are not securely enough roped together to cross the snow itself.

After scrambling and plunging up the river for about seven hours, I found the bed beginning to grow narrower, the banks became steep cliffs, and the water surged down with power. High above the stream, stood the wild village of Malakasi, the last permanent home of human beings in this direction, though farther up, there are a few shepherd cots which are left empty all winter; and even in summer the women there live in one village and the men

in another, some thousand feet higher; but it was pleasant to see that the path between those male and feminine villages, was deeply trodden. Malakasi itself owes its sad and beautiful name to the utter desolation of that region of rock and snow, and the Italian sound of it is due to some ancient immigration from the Roman colonies on the Danube. In fact, the common people along all this side of Pindus, do not speak Greek to each other at all, but Latin. It is unintelligible, but their common words prove that it is Latin none the less, though to a stranger they try to substitute Greek, and laugh at what they think their own rough dialect.

But in this remote corner of Thessaly, the outward life of the people bears stronger marks of the Turkish oppressor than of the Latin immigration, for in fact they have only been free for sixteen years. On reaching Malakasi, I was invited as guest to the one fairly rich home of the neighbourhood, a beautifully designed house, pervaded with spacious quietude. At the door the host took off

my boots, and put me on slippers without heels. I was then shown into a large empty room, and requested either to sprawl on the carpet, or recline on a broad divan, where I was to sleep at night. Presently a woman entered, draped in heavy Turkish stuffs of purple and red. Her hair was carefully concealed in thick wrappings, clasped with barbaric silver. She was great with child, but handed round jugs of water, brandy, and jam on a heavy bronze tray, while three or four officers who had come down with me from the guard-house, were stretched at ease on the floor. Not one of them moved. I thought the woman was a servant, and was badly treated at that. But she was the wife and mistress of the house, only by that impolite fiction of which I spoke before, she was supposed to be invisible. To have taken any notice of her presence would have been bad manners; to have asked to be introduced, something unheard of—something quite too “European” as they say there. Through all these valleys of Pindus, women are perhaps even worse off than they usually

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are. They toil in the field, hopelessly ignorant and depressed. Apparently they seldom converse. It is not thought worth while to send girls to school, and a man will tell you he has three sons and two "unregistered," and by the unregistered, he means his daughters.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE FIRST DEFEAT

TOWARDS evening of that day (April 12th) we heard distant but heavy firing over the mountains in the north, and vague tidings came that a Turkish force of several thousand had been surrounded by the Andarti at Krania, some miles across the frontier. Before day-break I set out in the direction with two guides by a very difficult path over the hills. In a deep valley, only a quarter of a mile from the boundary line itself, I came upon Koutsoufliani, a singularly miserable little village, but of great strategic importance. I found it swarming with Andarti, and I soon perceived that these were in fact the main body, and that instead of surrounding Turkish troops, they had themselves been driven back into the protection of the regular army. There

were about 2000 or so in the village, and many could be seen straggling away through the country southward.

We went straight on at once to the Greek block-house on the opposite hill, and in hopes of seeing Krania itself, I walked over the frontier into Turkish territory as far as a station which the Andarti had burnt a day or two before. From there I could see Baltino, only about two miles to the east, and far away northward I looked upon the hills of Macedon. But it was useless to go any farther, especially as the Turkish sentries were firing at everything that moved. So I returned to the village and spent the rest of the day there, listening to innumerable accounts of the action, each different from the other. The descriptions of battles by historians have always filled me with wonder and admiration, but now I more than ever marvel at the insight and accuracy with which they have described almost every minute of the enormous conflicts of the world. Here was a little skirmish which will never be heard of again to all time. The fighting had



lasted only a few hours, and was just over. I was getting information from the responsible officers, and in every case from eye-witnesses. Any historian would envy such materials, and make a comprehensible and magnificent picture of the whole event. For myself, I could hardly put down a single definite sentence and be sure it was really true. The best account I got from a huge aquiline Cretan, who, with the black Cretan handkerchief wound round his head, was sitting gloomily apart from the rest, suffering like that ancient Macedonian who said that a sorrow's crown of sorrow was to have no power but many thoughts at heart. Suddenly he turned to me, and cried, "If you had been there, you would despair of Greece for ever."

The Andarti had, in fact, made every mistake which was to be expected of an amateur force. The men complained that their captains had allowed them to be outflanked by the simplest manœuvre. The captains complained that the outflanking party were Albanians, hardly distinguishable from their own men in dress. All complained that they ran short of am-

munition, and had nothing to eat. The number of cartridges the Andarti could wind round their bodies was indeed astounding, but in the excitement of battle, firing without word of command, and with no particular aim, any person of active habits could get rid of them all in a hour and a half, provided the barrel did not melt. But worse than that, the Andarti had forgotten that in every force the quartermaster is the officer that counts, or, at all events, that no one counts without him. Iron of frame as those gaunt and bearded mountaineers were, they could not escape hunger in the end. And when hunger caught them, all was over but the running or dying.

In the retreat I think about ten had been killed and forty wounded. Unhappily some of the wounded were left on the ground, and throughout the war it was believed, probably with good reason, that the Turks burnt all Irregular prisoners alive. The remainder were of course safe directly they got back over the frontier. I found them sprawling about the village, overcome with sleep and hunger. They

were lying in the yards, on the ploughed fields, and across the very streets, whilst the drains dribbled down under their backs. One was pouring raw eggs down his throat; one was greedily plucking a hen only half-dead; another was hacking bits off a newly-killed lamb. The villagers, poor beyond even London's imagination, were freely giving all they could—meal, and even bread, and the wine which sells at a halfpenny a bottle. Under the broad eaves of one cottage I found the party of Italians which still remained with Cipriani. Their red flag was furled and leaning against the wall. The old Anarchist himself was too dead-asleep to be spoken with, but I met several of the volunteers who had come over from Italy with me in the ship. One of them was wounded. A bullet had gone through his revolver case, destroying two cartridges, had made a fine hole in his trousers, and lodged in the groin. He had just succeeded in picking it out with his pocket-knife, and when we had washed the hole and bound my handkerchief over it with a bit of string, he seemed easier. All agreed

that the Italians had shown great courage, but they could not stand the hardship of the life.

On a small mound a few hundred yards from the village stood a little shed among scanty trees. This was used as the magazine, and in front of it I found the Andarti's chief captain, Milonas, enthroned on an empty cartridge box, and directing the supply of ammunition with reassuring oaths. Other captains stood around him, and all were eager to give me their special account of the reverse (which, it is true, they claimed as a great victory, for they imagined they had killed 100 Turks, and like brave little children they estimated victory by totting up the numbers of the dead on each side and striking the balance). But at last Milonas was allowed to tell the story himself, and he appeared on the whole to exercise the highest authority, for he had rather more gold filigree round his cap, and more embroidery and silver clasps about his jacket and shirt than the others. He tried to put a brave face on the state of affairs, and said he intended to return

to the position that night : but he felt that his credit was shaken, and on every side I heard those whisperings and suspicious murmurs which are the worst torment an officer can have to bear. In the midst a peasant came up and, hat in hand, requested compensation for a mule which had been taken to carry ammunition and was killed. Milonas seized a great staff from a bystander and began beating the peasant unmercifully for his ignorance of military procedure. I turned away in disgust without waiting for the end of his story, but, as I looked back and saw him there among those gangs blackened by war, begrimed with filth, exhausted with fatigue and hunger, disheartened, and muttering their discontent, I remembered what storms of uncontrollable rage often sweep over officers even on a common field-day. And I wondered whether in his heart Milonas did not envy that gentle death which came upon his comrade Makris as he lay asleep under the trees at Baltino.

Going back through the village I heard three

volleys ring out clear. They were the only volleys fired since the fighting began. One of the wounded had died soon after my arrival, and they were now firing over his grave. No one showed any interest or regret. Rain began to fall heavily. The state of the village and the crowded fields around it was like what a volunteers' camp would be on a wet day without tents, without supplies, without even volunteer discipline, and with 150,000 rounds of ball cartridge distributed at random.

On reaching Malakasi, I found the villagers hurrying up to the top of the village with all kinds of offerings for the Andarti, which they deposited in the huge unfinished church that was slowly being built as a grateful memorial for their deliverance from the Turk sixteen years ago. It is lamentable to think that by the new frontier which Turkey claims since the war, not only Koutsoufiani, but Malakasi itself will return under the Turkish power, and the whole length of the one practicable pass over Pindus between the Greeks of Thessaly and their enslaved Greek brothers in Turkish Epirus will be closed from

end to end. I even doubt if that thank-offering of a church will ever be finished now.

That night our Greek hostess was delivered of a future Turkish subject, and we slept in a sort of guard-room up the village. Early next morning, being very anxious to have a look into Epirus, I climbed the steep sides of Pindus, or Mount Lakmon as this part of the chain is still called, following the track of the pass which goes nearly over the very top. I was accompanied by a large complimentary escort of Evzoni, who plunged their long white stockings cheerfully into the snow as we approached the summit, whilst their short petticoats flew out around their waists like the skirts of ballet-girls in a storm. The little station of Zigou at the top is unoccupied in winter, for it then becomes useless since the wayfarer walks right over its roof on the snow. From the pointed rocks just above it, the descent into Epirus is brief and very precipitous. I looked sheer down upon Turkish Metsovo spread out upon an opposite mountain side—a grey town with an old walled castle in the midst, and seven big guns in position on

the ridge above. Beyond were seen all the mountains of Epirus and in the far distance the snowy cliffs of Albania rose like crests of jagged wave breaking to the north. From Metzovo I could trace the thin and precipitous path along the face of a mountain leading down the valley to Janina and those rustling Dodonean oaks. That was the way I had hoped to reach Arta, and I could not think without astonishment that this was also the way by which Cæsar had come. Up that rocky precipice which fell away at my feet his legions had clambered, swearing their Roman oaths, and from the top his thin and firm-set face had looked back upon these self-same mountains, and forward down the desert gorge of the young Peneus to the distant snows of Olympus, where Zeus was still living, as Cæsar may perhaps have remembered with a smile. And now a few fir trees stood silent upon the rocks which he had trodden ; the great peaks of the central chain upon my left glistened with dazzling snow against the blue ; all was still, except that from the little station below there rose the strain to which my escort were dancing



in the courtyard, while they sang in Greek the Sapphic lines : " Be it peace, or be it war, my darling has the olive on her cheek, and on her breast the olive." For they say the olive where we the rose.

## CHAPTER VIII

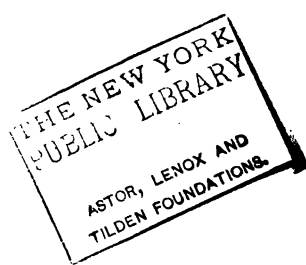
### THE PASSAGE OF PINDUS

I GOT back to my base of communications at Trikkala on the evening of Friday, April 16th, and found an old telegram to say that the regular *Daily Chronicle* war-correspondent was coming out to Athens, but was to go on at once to watch events at Crete. This left me in doubt what to do. My orders and wishes were to cross the mountains to Arta, but it was plain that war might now break at any moment and that the main military interest would lie in Thessaly. I was very unwilling, therefore, to leave Thessaly without a representative, and that night I reluctantly determined to go back to Larissa ; more especially because I was told that the other correspondents had been waiting quietly near the Crown Prince's headquarters for the actual war whilst I had been gadding along the frontier, or crossing it with the Andarti.

Next day I went up to Kalambaka again to make sure that the attack would not be delivered there, and on my return to Trikkala, just as I was preparing for a night-march to Larissa, I received another telegram telling me to go to Arta and cover the Epirus frontier. I rightly conjectured from this that some change of plan had been made with regard to Thessaly and Crete, and all night I tried to obtain horses and a guide for a start over Pindus in the morning. But nothing could be obtained. The streets were buzzing with rumours and excitement. The army had requisitioned everything that moved on wheels or four legs. Not even a donkey was allowed to leave the town. At last with the help of the Demarch and the Nomarch I heard of a broken-down cart and two dying horses which the owner was willing to risk for an outrageous sum. I was running very short of money, but I agreed. The man would only take me over the few miles of plain to the foot of the mountains. From there I was determined to walk alone to Arta with a knapsack, for as Mavro could not walk, he would have to be left



GREEK SHEPHERD BOY



behind. People told me it was impossible to get over the mountains at all at that season of year because of the snow, and that in summer it took five days on a mule, but the idea of going on foot seemed never to have occurred to anyone.

From what I heard it appeared to me probable that if only the track were fairly plain I could be in Arta in three days, walking alone. But in the morning I was met by the further difficulty that the two horses were too feeble to pull the cart even for a few miles, and the man would not go without three. Then a correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian* came to my rescue, lending me one of his own purchased horses to help me to the foot of the mountains, and to be returned that afternoon. It was an act of unexampled generosity at such a moment. His dragoman, who loved and tended him, put every possible hindrance in the way: and he was perfectly right, for that horse was never returned but was forcibly carried off for the army as it came back into the town. Very strangely, later on in the war, during one of

the disastrous retreats in Thessaly, the correspondent caught sight of its familiar face, and forcibly reclaimed it.

So at last we started on Sunday morning, April 18th, a beautiful spring day. In the western churches it was Easter Day, but in Greece it was only Palm Sunday, and as we jolted westward over the plain we met lines of women and girls coming to the church with long branches of bay in their hands; and I suppose the bay represents the palm quite as well as the English sallow with its silken tufts of gold. The meadows and marsh lands and lightly ploughed fields in which the corn was just rising to a deeper green, all smelt of the spring. The little Greek villages, scattered at wide intervals about the plain, smiled cheerfully in the sunshine. We crossed the Peneus by a military bridge, and skirted one of the very rare private estates in Greece. The owner and his two sons were standing in front of the rambling old house, something like a deserted château. They ran to meet us and asked, in French, for news. I stopt

the cart to answer, and at that moment a strange sound came across the enormous distance behind me, although from Olympus itself. I knew instantly that it was the sound of guns. My little knowledge of French left me, and I stared at the elderly gentleman in silence. "It is enough, monsieur," he said sadly. "I hear the news." "Perhaps it is only the Andarti, or they are firing to celebrate Palm Sunday," I answered at last, but I knew I was talking nonsense. "Au revoir, monsieur," he said. "I go to arrange my retreat."

The struggle for the Melouna Pass had in fact just begun, and that was the noise of it. I thought no more of Easter Day or the cheerful spring. About noon we passed that great defile of the Portais which I had watched so often, and jolted along the base of the bare mound where Cæsar had once stormed and sacked the great fortified town of Gomphi, and so we entered the mountains, and at the first turn of the valley came to the remote but happy little village of Mousaki, where the cart was to turn back. I think the villagers, and



indeed the natives of Pindus generally, had never seen a foreigner before, though there was a dim tradition that very many years ago a Frenchman had tried to get over the passes into Epirus, but had returned on the second day. The whole of the male population gathered in the street to look at me, and I was set with Mavro in an open booth, so that all might get a good view. The important Demarch came. He kept the village Pantapoleion, or Universal Shop, and to him I made my petition for a guide to Arta, and any four-legged thing that could crawl. At once a turmoil arose. All declared it was impossible, and yet—and yet—if only it were possible, what a chance it would be for somebody! Every grown man in the village wanted to start at once, and then as suddenly refused on the feeblest pretence. But each agreed that, as he could not go himself, Spero was the man. Spero had actually been, had walked to Arta and back not many years before. Spero was hustled through the crowd and set before me in the shop. He was a tall,

gaunt creature of about thirty, deeply sunburnt, shaggy, and unshorn. His eye was wild and furtive, but there was something innocent and woodland about his look which took my fancy, for he reminded me at the same moment both of Pan and John the Baptist. He was bare-headed, and his long brown coat, tied round the waist with a bit of string, was like enough to a raiment of camel's hair. He said he thought he could find the way again, and he had a horse, a nice little stallion, but he would not come. He was afraid. I asked him what he was afraid of. The snow and the Turks, he said quite simply. The crowd listened to him with silence and approval. It seemed quite natural to them that the man should be afraid, and should say so. The Demarch made him a speech, concluding with the order to be ready in an hour. "I will not go. I am afraid," was Spero's answer.

"Perhaps you would like to see our church," said the Demarch, turning to me, and he conducted me all round the village, whilst the

populace followed at twenty yards distance. If they came any nearer he turned round and beat them back with his staff; and never a smile between them all. The village had been destroyed by the Turks in 1877, though, of course, it was then Turkish property. The old church stood, but the faces of the saints were all slashed across by Turkish knives. A space at the west end was fenced off for the women, as is usual in this district. They have no seats, but stand herded together there like sheep in a pen, and may gather what spiritual comfort comes through the holes in the screen. On the stone ledges of that screen, for the first time I saw the bones of the dead laid out, as custom or the rocky soil directs. At the end of three or four years after death the body is dug up from the churchyard, and the bones are collected and placed in the church. They are washed with wine, and the priest gives them a blessing. If any love them, they lay flowers around the skull and thigh bones. Then after a while they bury them again in smaller space. It is a

grim ceremony, and yet might it not be some comfort even in death to think that the bones which on the whole have suited us so well, may be caressed once more by the hands we love, and again may know the taste of wine, and the touch of the flowers? Stooping down over one poor skull and smelling the resinous wine with which it has been washed, I recalled from the treasury of his lines that Persian's dying hope:

Ah, with the Grape my fading Life provide,  
And wash the body whence the life has died,  
And lay me, shrouded in the living leaf,  
By some not unfrequented Garden side.

That ev'n my buried Ashes such a snare  
Of Vintage shall fling up into the Air  
As not a True-believer passing by  
But shall be overtaken unaware.

It is but the natural tendency to self-torment among mankind to suppose, as these Greeks of Pindus do, that if indeed the exhumed bones are white to view, all is well with the soul who once dwelt in them, and now is safe in Paradise; but if the bones are dark and dis-

coloured, all is not well, nor is Paradise gained. Alas, the poor bones which I bent over were almost black, and yet against the cheek a bunch of scarlet anemones had been laid.

On our return Spero stood with his pony in the middle of the square, the very picture of unwilling martyrdom. His friends were round him trying to give him heart. He wept quietly, but was already resigned to a destiny tempered by rewards. He had even packed our small baggage on the wooden saddle which the Greeks have cunningly devised for the carriage of loads and the torture of man. I told Mavro to mount, but just as we were setting off, a queer little old figure in an enormous grey cloak rushed into the crowd dragging a nice brown pony behind him. "You shall pay me the same as Spero," he said to me, as if the matter was settled. It was embarrassing, but as I knew I had not anything like enough money left to pay one, I determined to engage them both. Besides, I thought they would dry each other's tears, and there was something so

humorous about the old man's unwashed and wrinkled face that I laughed, and to laugh prevents refusal. "You shall be in Arta in five days," he went on as he held the saddle for me to mount, and he added an oath of complicated horror and profanity. "If you're not there in three days," I answered, "I shall hang you both to your horses' tails." And having requested Mavro to make this point perfectly clear to them in the best Greek, I saluted the Demarch, and we rode onward into the mountains amid the cheers of the villagers. The next thing I heard of that gay little Mousaki was that the Turks had seized and devastated it, leaving not a soul to dwell there.

That night we only reached the next village, some three or four hours further on, and after seeing the church and the school under the usual escort, I read myself to sleep on the floor of the shop over the young schoolmaster's copy of Plutarch's "Aristeides." It is at such lonely times, and in the midst of a half savage existence that one learns the true value of noble records.

I remember with what freshness, alone in Pindus, I read the passage which tells how during a performance of the "Seven against Thebes" in the theatre of old Athens all eyes instinctively turned to the place where Aristeides sat as the actor recited the lines :

For not to seem the just, but just to be,  
Is his desire, and deep the furrow runs  
Which yields his wisdom harvest, and therefrom  
Upsprings anew a crop of counsel pure.

Early next morning the serious part of the climb began. The hardly distinguishable track first plunged right down to the bottom of the valley, and then made straight for the crest of the central ridge up the bare and crumbling side of a dome-shaped mountain which still keeps the Greek name of Tympanos, or the Drum. It seemed entirely impossible that living ponies could scramble up such a steep as that, but somehow they managed it, though in places we had almost to set their feet in the proper crevices, and then to lift them up with a heave altogether, and the poor beasts uttered great sighs and struggled forward almost as upright as

on a perpendicular ladder. Before noon we were among the snow. It was soft and melting, but the ponies did not sink in much above their knees, and though we suffered from the terrible glare there was no real danger beyond the difficulty of keeping in the direction of the track when it was covered by long fields of unbroken surface. As we approached the top I floundered on in front, full of eagerness to look over the edge and see to the west. The watershed itself was all that a watershed ought to be, and of all the formations of the earth's surface there is none more exhilarating and delightful. It was not more than a hundred yards or so across. It was deep in snow, but now and again beneath the snow one could hear the water dripping with the promise of summer. And every drop, on one side went to Tempe, and on the other down by long courses to the bright Gulf of Corinth so far away. At the summit I turned for a last look at the Thessalian plain eastward. It lay extended far below me under a soft and misty air, but beyond and above the mist Olympus rose perfectly clear and with a singular purity



of white. In front of me to the west lay a profound and narrow valley, into which our little track at once disappeared, and beyond stood chain after chain of snowy mountains as far as sight could see. But a little southward far away rose one vast barrier, enormous in its mass, and I watched it as one watches an enemy of unknown strength, for I knew it stood between us and Arta.

Down into that sunless gorge we plunged, and so came upon the first of those dreary and far-scattered villages which starve in central Pindus, so poor that glass is never to be seen, and life is fed on that sticky maize, and even the halfpenny wine is only found by rare good luck. The people are owned by a languid gentleman whom I had seen in Athens lolling about the square with a rifle and cartridge-belt. We passed the few gaunt houses without stopping, and the remainder of that day was one long conquest of adversity. Sometimes the narrow track traversed the face of cliffs so steep that we had to haul at the ponies' bridles and grip their tails firmly lest they should roll sheer

down into the torrent below. Often the torrent had to be crossed, and each time was a new excitement. In the afternoon we reached a main stream, which, I think, was the upper course of the Achelous, or Aspropotamos (White River), as it is now called. But I cannot be certain, for the map was quite useless, and the district has never been properly surveyed. Anyhow, the water, white with flood and snow, was tearing over its hidden rocks, quite unfordable by man or beast. Fortunately, it so happened that a few woodmen were laboriously conveying some hundreds of felled pine trees down the stream. Driving half-a-dozen of the trunks athwart the current, and stemming them up with the long poles, we formed a kind of floating bridge or raft, across which the ponies were induced to creep with much difficulty and peril. When we gained the opposite bank we found the track had disappeared, and for a long time we wandered up and down the precipitous mountain side to no purpose. At last the men sat down, each with the nose of his exhausted pony in his lap. I was afraid they were going to

weep, but they were only mutinous. Spero was terrified for his life, the old man for his beast, whom he loved as a child. Both declared, with one voice, that they would turn back. Fortunately the river was behind us, and that kept them hesitating, whilst I told Mavro to make it clear to them that I was quite willing they should return, but though it grieved me to the heart, I should not pay them a penny, and, for my own part, I was going on by myself. This ultimatum led to a conference, during which I put on my knapsack, and, with compass in hand, set off vaguely in the direction of Arta. I had hardly got out of sight when I came upon the track again. It was a relief, for in reality I was almost at my wits' end, and if they had left me without food or shelter in the middle of those uninhabited gorges of Pindus, it is fairly certain I should never have got to Arta at all. But at my shout they followed, and we were reconciled, happily without tears.

So for hour after hour we skirted along near the top of the precipice overhanging the river, and it was past sunset when at last we came to

more open ground, with fields and valleys, where stood a pitiful little village called Lascovo. As we passed the dim church, two priests were reciting the Lenten service. Though I have attended service in most of the English Cathedrals, I have never heard the words of prayer and worship uttered with anything like the rapidity and irreverence to which those two men attained. They were masters of a rushing gabble and whining sing-song, which surpassed everything I had known. About twice a minute they prostrated themselves, bumping their foreheads three times on the pavement, with extraordinary agility. Their only audience was God and the village idiot.

When they came out gasping from the worship, the old priest with true courtesy invited us to his own house a little further up the hill. There he lighted a brushwood fire in the middle of a fairly large room. No furniture was in it but two great heaps of stuffs—petticoats, aprons, rugs, and things in heavy reds and blues—which the family had woven at home for the dowries of the two daughters. As

it was fast week we were served with paste and olives, but Mavro thoughtfully suggested that I was a Protestant. Whereupon the old priest exclaimed, "Oh, he's an idolater, is he? Then he shall have some eggs." So eggs I had, fried with a seasoning of idolatry. And I wondered what Exeter Hall would have said to such theological confusion.

When supper was over and the priest's wife and children had been allowed to eat up the scraps, we all settled down for a night together on the floor in the usual Chaucerian chaos. But the interest of my presence gave the priest no rest. Long after I had crept under my rug in the place of honour furthest from the pet goat, that shaggy man kept bringing in members of his flock to stare at me as an object-lesson in anthropology, and I felt with joy that, like a lecturer's lantern slide, I was at last diffusing culture. But at midnight he went out to worship again in the church, and I slept in some sort of peace. Next morning we left him heaping a manure cart, and but for his tall hat and plaited hair he would have been undis-

tinguishable from the uncouth souls of whom he had the care. Meantime, his daughters, barefooted and unwashed, splashed about in the liquid mud, driving the goats to the mountains with stones and barbaric cries. For £10 down, Mavro told me I might have married one of them, dowry and all. Amused with the contrast of such a life with the life of an English priest—his faultless clothes, clean sheets, numerous bedrooms, charming wife and daughters, lawn-tennis courts, humble but presentable vehicle, and quiet library where hardly a blue-bottle dares to hum—and wondering what might be the loss and gain of those different conditions, I scrambled down the rocky path and over a narrow bridge, which with one splendid span leaps high above the Achelous at the mouth of an unimaginable gorge.\* And as we climbed the opposite mountain I saw a man hastening towards us down the path in front,

\* I think, but am not sure, that this was the bridge of Korakos which Lieut.-Col. Baker once measured for its perfection of structure. He found the span 132 ft., roadway hardly 6 ft. broad, and 181 feet long, height 125 ft. It appears to have been built by monks.

and I knew at once that, like the messenger in some old play, he bore the tidings of fate.

His message, for a Greek, was brief: "I was in Arta on Sunday," he said. "The war began in the afternoon. The 'Turks tried to cross the river by tying Christian women in front of them, in hopes the Greeks would not fire. All were killed. Their shrieks were frightful. The town lies flat in ruins. To go on is death."

In plain English I told him how deeply he lied, but on the main point I could no longer delude myself. The war had begun without me. That day there was no more converse except that soon after noon the men again declared they would go no further unless I consented to make a five days journey of it. I was forced to act as before, and went forward alone, taking only my sack, and telling Mavro to return to Athens with our few other stores. I soon found they were all following slowly behind, and presently I could hear them muttering libels upon my parentage and ancestry. But at that moment my ancestry was more indifferent to myself even than usual, for in

turning sharp round a height at the edge above an almost invisible valley, I heard the boom of guns very far off—the two great guns of Arta, they must have been. The rest of that day remains in my mind as a sort of nightmare jumble of precipices and slushy snow, of gorges gloomy with black ilex, of the river white with flood, and of another narrow bridge which joined cliff to cliff by its high-arched span.

That night we spent in a barn at a dripping village, rightly called the Sewer of Sorrow. We had at last reached the foot of the enormous barrier which I had seen from the top of the Drum, and next morning we left the basin of the Achelous, which that barrier here turns southward, and keeping to the west over the steep shoulder of the water-shed we entered the basin of the Arachtos, which flows by Arta. It was a similar region to what we had passed through, but the gorges seemed to become still gloomier, if anything, and the track more terrible for the beasts. Now and again the rain fell in sheets. The ponies were worn out. The old man looked as though his very heart



was weeping over their condition. His own feet also were in a horrible state, and it was in vain that he washed them with his pocket-handkerchief in the streams. I soaped a pair of socks and gave them to him, but still we hardly crawled along the obscure and stony way. Unhappily also, for the first time, we came upon a long train of refugees winding into the mountains, with their rugs and sheep and children. At the sight of them and at the horror of their imaginary tales, our men grew rigid with ancestral terror of the Turk, and again sat down, definitely refusing to stir. This was far the most serious mutiny of all, and it was only checked when I suddenly mounted the old man's favourite and rode forward as hard as I could make the poor creature go. He stood hesitating for a minute between his life and his pony, but he was a good fellow at heart, and so his pony won, and he came along very meekly for the rest of the way, though at a solitary khan we found every scrap of food had been plundered, and we had to go forward starving and much exhausted.

After that, for mile on mile we crept along a fairly level path over the top of hills covered with scrub and wood. We were very high up but could get no view ; till at last, late in the afternoon, we came to an abrupt edge of mountain from which glimpses into a vast distance westward were here and there revealed, or dimly conjectured through clouds of heavy mist under a blurred sun, purple as in a haunted fairy-land. Unknown mountain tops stood like islands above the cloud ; and there was a plain, and an estuary dividing it, and here and there spaces of dull blue water like lead could be seen through the rents in the vapour, and I knew with joy that they must be that Ambracian Gulf which Cleopatra saw. And far away, high up, as though it were a part of the sky itself, gleamed one thin line of silver, which was the open sea, the old Adriatic. In three days and a few hours we had come through Pindus, and now at my feet, in the depths of a broad valley, I saw a high road running, and at the end of it, almost encircled by the white curve of a river, stood a town with the old

walls of a Venetian castle close beside the stream, and, high above on the hill, a large square fortress, and farther on the clustered domes of a great Byzantine church and the line of an ancient bridge. That, then, was Arta, the place I had so longed to see.

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## CHAPTER IX

### VICTORY

It was towards evening on Wednesday, April the 21st, as we descended from the mountains into the broad valley which runs from the Ambracian Gulf up to the town of Arta. The descent was dangerously rapid, but by the time we reached Peta, a hill village about two miles from the town, it was getting dark, and the men steadily refused to move another step.\* The place swarmed with officers and soldiers, for the head-quarter staff was encamped close by. On every side we were met with a cry so full of joy that I could scarcely believe it. "The Turks have gone!" they kept shouting, and indeed it was true. Some officers took us to a point from which everything could still be seen under

\* Peta was the scene of a miserable defeat of the Greek Insurgents by the Turks during the War of Independence about 1825.

the lingering sunset. On the half circle of forts which commanded the town from the opposite hills the Turkish guns were silent. The cannonade had lasted till the evening before, but that morning all had been still. Their trenches across the river no longer sputtered with rifle-fire. They had fled, and we had only lost one single man. It is sad now to recall the joy and excitement of that evening. There was little enough to drink, but we were all drunk with pleasure. Again and again I had to listen to the story of those three days and the grand artillery. We sat up till the stars were pale, and I suppose few of us will ever be so entirely happy again.

Next morning we rode on into the town. Under the olive trees, as we went, and in the deep-cut trenches along the river's bank, the battalions who had slept there in their overcoats were hurriedly polishing up their arms and making ready for a general advance. The whole place had the littered and dissipated look of a common the day after the fair. The river Arachtos, after keeping a general southerly

course parallel to the main range of Pindus from its source in the snows near Metsovo, suddenly turns westward as it emerges from the mountains close by Peta, and, sweeping even a little northward round the base of a broad projecting hill it runs south again, and so continues its course into the Ambracian Gulf some fifteen or twenty miles further on. Along the greater part of its course it forms the boundary between Greek and Turkish Epirus. But it must be remembered that the population on both banks are almost entirely Greek and Christian, and that even by the Treaty of Berlin the whole of Epirus was granted to Greece up to a boundary north of Janina. The town of Arta is built on the slope and level at the foot of that broad projecting hill round which the river sweeps. The hill is in fact the end of a long and stony hog's back extending from the Gulf to the town and separating the valley of the high road from the valley of the river. At the extreme point of the promontory beside the river, some mediæval power, probably the Byzantine Emperors, built



a powerful castle which in this war served as barracks and store. Keeping this castle well on the right the main-road takes a short cut straight through the town, and passing near the ancient cathedral, one of the finest Byzantine churches in the world, sacred to St Theodora of Arta, the wife of the Emperor Justinian, it runs on for about three-quarters of a mile through sweet-scented orange groves till it crosses the river into Turkish territory by the famous bridge of Arta. That bridge was built by the Eastern Cæsars in the tenth century. It rises, as it were, in two small ripples and then a large wave, to span the deepest channel of the river which swirls under it in an opaque white stream. The roadway across it is narrow and very steep, but no doubt the building of it was a marvel; so marvellous in fact that according to a strange old ballad which is still sung in Greece the architect could not make one of the central piles steady till he built up his lover alive inside it.

High above the bridge upon that projecting hill, so as to command both sides of the pro-

montory, the Turks during their possession built a huge square barrack, which was now used as the centre of the Greek artillery. The two largest guns were posted close beside its walls, and there were several batteries in front and on either side of it. The town itself has spread very much at random, with narrow and ill-paved little streets, all over the flattish end of the promontory between the castle and the cathedral. Like most places where English hands have never been it is dirty and beautiful. The combined use of timber and stone, the wide and black caverns which are the shops, the overhanging eaves and enclosed courtyards, provide in every street and corner an ever-varying brilliancy of light and shade. Here and there one comes upon a ruined mosque—there are about fifteen of them in all—with the thin white minaret rising in air like an extinguished candle. Here and there stands an immemorial church, red with narrow Roman bricks, encrusted with pictured tiles, and sometimes still telling of old Greece in its sculptured capitals. Down by the river stand

a few houses of the rich in great deserted gardens, protected by grey and lofty walls. In peace-time these quiet homes must have possessed a singular beauty. But now, everyone who could afford to go had fled with all their moveable possessions. The gardens were trampled down and waste. The empty houses were occupied as barracks for the soldiers, when they were relieved from service in the trenches. Under the walls and garden trees the river whispered and hissed along its broad and stony bed, and about the brown-tiled roofs of the whole town thousands of small brown hawks chased the flying insects which they caught in their mouths like swifts.

The bank opposite this projecting hill or promontory on which the town stands was, of course, shaped like the inside of a horse-shoe. It rose into hills at distances of about a quarter to half a mile, or in some places a mile from the river's edge. Just opposite the castle, there was a fairly large extent of greenish plain, leading very gradually up into more distant mountains. On the east side of this plain,

some half mile from the river, stood the beautiful village of Greminitzza, which I think was entirely deserted during the whole of the war. That slip of plain was to become the scene of a terrible contest later on, but at the beginning all attention was naturally fixed on the semi-circle of heights along which the Turks had planted their batteries. The most important batteries stood on the strongly fortified hills called Imaret, which come down to within a few hundred yards of the river, almost opposite the cathedral. But batteries had been stationed so as to command the town from every possible point, and anyone would suppose that decent artillery could have knocked the place to pieces, and set it on fire in a few hours. But the Turks had been firing as hard as they could for two and a half days, and had done no harm to the Greek batteries on the hill, while the town itself remained practically untouched, but for an occasional hole smashed through the side of a house, as in the empty room where I slept for a night or two at first.

Why the Turks had fled from so excellent a position was a mere mystery to me at the time. We know now that these heights were held mainly by Redif or Reserve troops, under inexperienced officers and an indifferent general, Mustafa Pasha. The Turkish line of communication was the long high-road between Monastir and Preveza, passing through Janina and Philippiades on the way. Its total length is about 220 miles, and transport was very slow. The Governor of Janina, Ahmed Hifzi Pasha, who was nominally in command, was an incapable old man, and nothing effective was done till the arrival of Osman Pasha, an energetic and experienced soldier, some days later. At any rate the Turks, overcome with terror at the Greek artillery, had carried off their guns in haste, and were withdrawing from the whole district which may roughly be called the Louros valley, the Louros being a small but deep and rapid stream which flows down from the direction of Janina, almost parallel to the high-road, and passing Philippiades enters the Ambracian Gulf some

twenty miles west of the mouth of the Arachtos. Between the bridge of Arta and this river Louros lies a perfectly flat plain, eight or ten miles across, stretching away to the south and south-west towards Salaora and Preveza on the Gulf, and north-westward to Philipiades and the hills, the northern end of the plain being an undrained and impassable marsh.

Into this plain the Greek troops now kept pouring over Arta bridge. General Manos in command had about 16,000 men altogether. Some had crossed the Arachtos by a pontoon lower down at Banni, and occupied Salaora where they captured a few old guns. Some had advanced towards Preveza, and cut the communication between that fortress and its base at Janina; and on Thursday afternoon, soon after my arrival, the Head-quarter Staff removed from Arta to Philipiades. I longed to accompany them, but was overcome with a feverish sickness, and had hardly enough money left to feed Mavro, the two men, and the horses for one more day. The men indeed

were only anxious to get home again, and kept murmuring for their pay. My persistent excuse was that the moment they left my service the horses would be taken from them by the army; and they were perfectly aware that was true. Still their protests were piteous, and the old man came and squatted on his heels beside my rug and nearly all night poured out his incomprehensible lamentations. Next day I wandered far over the plain and walked out to Philipiades itself. It was the Greek Good Friday, and I met many Christians coming from the Turkish villages to worship in Arta. They greeted me with the salutation, "Christ is crucified for us," and all looked full of joy, as though the day-spring had at last risen indeed. Near Philipiades I was shown the part of the Louros where the Turks in their wild panic were supposed to have sunk their guns. Since they had fled from their batteries, not a soldier had been seen except a few bewildered runaways who were taken in strings as prisoners into Arta, and about a dozen savage creatures who had been left to their

fate in a wretched hospital and glared at us in silence like wild beasts expecting death. The Turkish tents had been abandoned as they stood. In the officers' quarters we found meals laid out and left half-eaten. The horses of Fouat Bey, the hated tyrant of the district, were standing in the stables, and very useful the Greek officers found them. Bankers and money-lenders had left masses of account books, which soon littered the streets, mixed with exquisitely written copies of the Koran. One long street had been absolutely burnt to the ground, and the town was still on fire in several places, whilst the Greek population, overjoyed at their short-lived freedom, were helping the flames to demolish the homes of their tyrants.

In the little village of Strevena close beside Philipiades I found General Manos and his Staff. I soon saw that something critical was happening, and at last I heard that in the previous night a single battalion (the 1st of the 10th or Corfu Regiment) under Komondouros had been sent forward along the old and disused mountain road towards Janina,



and had occupied without opposition the commanding post of Pentepegadia or the Five Wells. That old road had at some early time been strengthened by rude Turkish forts at intervals of about five miles, and Pentepegadia was the largest of these. Since the new road had been constructed along the bank of the Louros, some three or four miles to the west of the old one, the mountain road had been abandoned and was now so rough as to be impassable for anything but light infantry and mountain guns. Still Pentepegadia was evidently a position of such importance for an advance on Janina that I had drawn a circle round it on my map before I left Athens. The news that it was ours without a blow filled us all with joy, but within five minutes an orderly came galloping up to report that the battalion there was being attacked in force. Another battalion was at once marched off in support, but it was already too late. That morning Osman Pasha, who had but just arrived to take command in Janina, brought six battalions and two guns to bear upon Komondouros and his small party,

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and at the same time as we were listening to the news the Greeks were in fact being driven from the position by overwhelming numbers. The Line fought well enough, and they were fairly well supported by a body of Corfiote Irregulars, but as no reinforcements came retreat was inevitable. Our loss was about 80 killed, 60 taken prisoners (20 of them wounded) and about 150 wounded besides. Amongst the killed was the gallant young Englishman Clement Harris. Within the next few days I became very intimate with the Corfu party to whom he had attached himself. During the engagement he was with them on a knoll to the right of the Greek position. Early in the day he was wounded in the foot, but refused to leave his companions. When the retreat became general he still refused to go, and the last they saw of him he was slowly hobbling away from the knoll, turning round now and again to take another shot at the enemy who were fast closing him round. No one saw his actual death, and for a long time we hoped he might have been taken alive.

But the Turks did not take Andarti alive. His comrades being Islanders were able to appreciate his remarkable gift of music, and they always spoke to me of him with admiration and regret.

The loss of Pentepegadia was our first disaster. If General Manos had wished to keep the enemy on the run, he should have advanced upon Janina in full force by both the old and the new roads at once, instead of hanging about in Philipiades for two days and sending out a single unsupported battalion to hold a position of such importance. The whole thing was simply a mistake in generalship. I think it was his only mistake, but it led to all the other disasters of the war in Epirus. He did his best to retrieve it. Bodies of troops were advanced that night up both the roads, but it was all too late now, and the new road was left practically unoccupied for the rest of the campaign. More serious even than the strategic loss was the effect on the troops. The news that many had actually been killed, the sight of the wounded being carried back to the hospitals in their

blood-stained bandages, groaning as they went, depressed and terrified them; for they were very sympathetic and quite unaccustomed to war. Very early next morning I came out to Philipiades again, and at the old Khan called Khanopouli by the top of the marsh where the plain ends and the mountain-road begins, I had my first experience of a panic. Battalions were marching backwards and forwards, utterly wearied and disheartened. The guns were being hurried back to Arta. I actually found skirmishers thrown out, and a company of unmounted cavalry (they had no horses at all) was placed in position lying in the reeds as though an attack was instantly expected. The Staff was returning to Arta. The peasants and villagers had taken fright, and were hurrying off with all their moveables, spreading a general panic down the road. The men were sick with hunger from the strict Lenten fast. On all sides I heard murmurs against the officers, and over all there was the feeling of distrust and uneasiness, the corruption of that absolute faith in leadership which alone makes a soldier's life endurable.

Though warned with the utmost solemnity not to go further, I walked up the mountain-road for about two hours till I came to Koumzades, a lovely village hidden away in the depths of the mountains, and commanding a pass which was being carefully entrenched, and by nature was defensible against almost any odds. There I was within two hours or so of our extreme front, but having neither food nor money I was obliged to return to Arta. Mavro and I had no hope of getting anything to eat that night, for I had only two drachmæ (rather less than a shilling) left, and that would have to go for the men and horses. Happily one of the five other English correspondents in Epirus gave us a share of his own scanty provisions, and late that night to my great relief I received a supply of money, as though from heaven. Summoning the men at once I told them I was sorry to use compulsion, and I would pay the full price, but I positively must buy their two ponies. If they attempted to take them away, the army would seize them, and they knew what that meant. The poor fellows

really had no choice. Spero did not mind much. He even agreed to remain in attendance on the beasts at a fixed daily wage, provided only I took a vow never to lead him into personal danger. But the old man was inconsolable. Squatting on his heels as his manner was he poured out his threnody. The dear brown pony was his joy, his wife, his child, his all the world. What, should he part with it for a handful of dirty little notes, some of them worn sadly thin! Tears ran from his eyes, and it was only by making him count the notes over and over for fear I had paid him short, that at last I reduced him to a kind of numbed composure. The counting of those notes lasted nearly all night, for each was worth something less than sixpence, and the price for both ponies ran to nearly twenty pounds. But at last it was over; the old man rose, revealed an almost irresistible inclination to fall on my neck, and set off on his lonely climb back over Pindus to his home.

It was already the Greek Easter Sunday (April 25th), before he started, and as with

our little baggage tied upon the beasts, we made our way for good and all to the actual front, the rugged streets of Arta were horrible with the blood of Pascal lambs, and on all sides the soldiers were discharging their ball-cartridges in their delight at the Resurrection. The panic of the previous day was over, and under every tree in the orange-orchards, little families of refugees from across the river had settled down, and were preparing to break the long fast as comfortably as harassing circumstances allowed. But the looks of all were sad, and the kindly greeting of "Christ is risen" came but seldom. We reached Koumzades without event, and having the village on our right, approached the narrow and difficult part of the pass. The old road here becomes terribly rough and steep. It enters a wild district of stony mountain, entirely grey but for a dusty-looking shrub with yellow flower, not unlike ragwort, but strongly aromatic. Small bodies of troops were posted at intervals along the hills within touch of each other—about seven thousand of them in all. At the top of the pass, some

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eight or ten hours march from Arta, we were stopt by a sentry who conducted us to the commanding officer. With him and some other officers we found two English correspondents, who had just come up from Koumzades, and pitched a convenient little tent on a beautiful site to command the upland valley along which the track led to Janina. A Greek officer led me to a stony mountain top, and explained the position of things. From there we could see most of the bodies of men scattered about the hills on both sides of the pass. At the end of the valley in front stood an old half-ruined hostelry which I think the Turks call Karavan Serai. Beyond this we could trace the mountain road entering another narrow pass on its way due north to Janina, and the gradual advance of our Evzoni up that bit of road was covered by a battery of mountain guns on a hill to the left of the Khan. On the right, to my surprise, I suddenly discerned a village, which the officer told me was Karvarsaras. For protection it was built high up on the mountain side, at the top of a kind of cliff, and its few grey houses were



hardly to be distinguished from the grey rocks out of which they had been built. I determined to seek quarters there till the next stage in our advance on Janina. After about an hour's climb with the ponies, we reached the place, but found hardly any of the shepherd population were left there still. Most had fled into Arta, or were hiding further up in the mountains. We succeeded in forcing our way into a deserted house—perhaps the most important in the village, for it was strongly fortified with a twenty foot wall built round its courtyard, and cleverly contrived loop-holes for rifles from the inside commanded all the approaches to the door and windows. The interior was entirely empty, and it was with a fine sense of possession and permanency that we occupied the bare floor of the upper room, and kindled a blaze of logs and brushwood in the dark kitchen downstairs. For four days that fortified house was my home, and they were the four happiest days of the campaign, for victory still seemed to be within our grasp, and we ourselves were now as near the furthest front as it was possible to get.

## CHAPTER X

### ON THE BALANCE

THE little fortified window of our upper chamber looked to the north-west over the steep descent, across the bit of level valley where stood the old Khan of Karavan Serai with its well, and up to the rounded hill where our battery was stationed. We could also see for some distance along the mouth of the pass by which the troops were slowly advancing towards Pentepegadia again, and beyond rose a splendid mountain of bare rock, scored and and riven by deep channels and crevasses under the power of frost and snow and heat. I am not quite sure whether it was the ancient Tomaros or not, but at all events the shepherds told us it looked down upon Janina and its lake. A little south of that, just under the sunset, stood the wild ranges of Lakka, and somewhere amongst their heights was Souli,

that scene of almost mythical heroism some eighty years ago, when its women for the last time joined hands in the national dance, and one by one danced over the edge of the precipice rather than endure the embraces of the Turk. One could not but remember also that in some valley at the foot of that stern and wrinkled mountain the breed of Spartans first arose.

There was a strange silence over all the scene, a silence deepened by the lonely cry of a shepherd-girl keeping her goats together among the rocks, or the boom of a heavy bee in search of flowers. But in the midst of the silence now and again our guns would sound as from time to time a body of Turks showed themselves up the pass. In the afternoon I descended from the village and went up to the battery. The officer in command of the artillery could speak French, and there were two Corfiote Irregulars who had been in London and knew English fairly well. We sat for a long time watching a body of Evzoni who were holding the extreme position up the pass, about



A GREEK LINESMAN AND EVZONUS

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half a mile off, and had gained a hundred yards or so that day. I do not know what peculiar feeling urged me to go forward and join them. The officer ordered me to do no such thing. "Why expose a Philhellenic life?" he said; "there are none to spare in Europe now." But that queer mixture of curiosity, and something else which tempts men unnecessarily into danger drove me on. I went down, therefore, from the battery hill and began the ascent of the track up the pass. For about two hundred yards all was well, but then a little bend of the road exposed me to all the lost bullets which the Turks kept firing in volleys over the edge in front. It was the first time I had been under really serious fire, and I found at once that the "sub-conscious self," which Dr Waldstein had written so quietly about, became positively outrageous in its protest. As the bullets came humming by me like those heavy bumble bees, I tried all I possibly could to overcome that hidden traitor which lurks within us, but it was utterly impossible to prevent finching at any louder buzz than usual. The

effort was probably harder because I was alone, unarmed, and not in the least excited. I remembered that Goethe under fire had "seen brown," and was disappointed to find no such thing in my case. I saw neither brown nor red. The mountains, the sun, and the flowers looked exactly the same as usual in themselves, only I was seized with a sudden and overwhelming affection for them, as if I could never bear to see them no more. I remember thinking of a passage in George Meredith where he says that men who suppose they are tired of life should go and hang over Alpine precipices for a while. I had never pretended to be in the least tired of life, but here I was in quite as favourable a situation for discovering life's value. I think there were only two things which could have kept me walking steadily forward up that road without any visible sign of hesitation in spite of my terror. One was the feeling bred in our bones that no Englishman could possibly show fear when a lot of foreigners were watching his behaviour. The other was the knowledge that a certain comrade of mine at home would have

gone up that road not only without shrinking, but full of exhilaration at the danger. It was those two thoughts which kept trying to subdue the "sub-conscious self," and telling it to hold its peace. But whenever a bullet shrieked past me, or fell with a puff and a splash upon the road, it uttered its protest none the less ; and it was all in vain that I abused it, calling it a mere animal passion for existence at any price, a "bloodthirsty clinging to life," a contemptible phase of Schopenhauer's "Wille." It took no notice of abuse, but continued its outcries till at last I arrived at the crest of the gently rising hill and sank down among the hospitable Evzoni who were lying there under cover of the rocks as our advanced firing line.

It was a strong company, nearly two hundred men I should think, scattered along the little ridge in sections. Some of them looked round at me with sympathetic interest. A short lieutenant, who was giving the words of command for the volleying to our section, shouted to me in very bad French to go back, "because there was ——" He forgot his



French for danger, and I suggested the ancient Greek word. That happened to be right, and I felt a certain pleasure that I had remembered the accent and neglected the quantity. The men all smiled, and in mere national bravado I walked up to the lieutenant, looked round the sky, and said in French I was afraid it was going to rain. He borrowed my field-glasses, and then ordered his men to readjust their sights. Standing at his side I looked eagerly at the bit of road which had now opened in front of me. There was a slight descent, then the ground rose again to a similar ridge a little higher than ours, and about 500 yards away or something less. Just as I looked at it, a long row of little grey puffs burst from its edge, and exactly at the same moment the air all around us screamed and howled. The rocks were chipped, the earth scored, and like live things the bullets went shrieking through the prickly bushes at our side. "Good volley!" said the little lieutenant, and proceeded to give his orders. I knelt down and looked along our line, expecting to see a number of the

fellows stretched on the ground. But no one was even hurt. They were all engaged in adjusting sights and taking steady aim for their volley in return.

So the firing went on, almost alternately. I knelt behind some pretty fair cover with half a dozen soldiers and watched it for about half an hour. No one was hit, but escapes were almost ridiculous. The division between life and death was in itself so trifling, and yet it made such a lot of difference. The old captain of the company came walking composedly along and offered me his water-bottle. Just as I thanked him and refused, a bullet growled past him, within an inch or two of his cheek as it seemed. He ducked his head instantly, but that would have been too late, and as it went moaning over the ridge, he turned to look after it and laughed. Soon afterwards, as I had expected, rain began to fall. The lieutenant looked at me, and he laughed too. Just then two mountain guns, which I had seen going up the great hill on our right, opened fire upon the Turks, and though we could only hear the

boom, we all jumped up and laughed and cheered till the next volley sent us crouching down again. At length I said farewell to the lieutenant, and as I came away the captain insisted on sending an Evzonus with me, so that if I were hit on the way back I might not be left neglected. It was in vain I protested that he was quite as likely to be hit as I, and so we went side by side, and in my efforts to explain my admiration for the Greek cause, I think we both must have forgotten about the danger, though the bullets were falling at least as thick as before. What was more remarkable, we met an ammunition pony coming up, with her little foal leaping about behind her heels. I turned and watched them with more anxiety than I should have watched human beings, and they both passed up that terrible bit of road unconcerned and unharmed. But only a few minutes after I came away the little lieutenant got a bullet in his thigh. I saw him afterwards in one of the Greek hospitals, cheered him up with a volume of Daudet, and together we recalled the French for danger.

Next day nothing of importance happened. We sat in the battery watching the guns throw an occasional shell up the pass, where another Company had taken position in the firing-line. But no advance was made. We were told we were waiting for reinforcements, waiting till Preveza fell to the fleet. It was nearly a week now since the Turks had run from Arta, and every day the report had been published that Preveza had fallen. But every day, from far off to the south-west, we heard the dull boom of her great guns, and that told us the rumour was only another lie. Probably the fleet might have hammered against that fortress till Doomsday without the smallest effect. Anyhow Preveza never fell, and the rumour came to be regarded as rather a joke. Still, since he had lost the Five Wells, General Manos was probably right to keep us waiting till he could afford more men for the front. Janina was an unfortified town, but to take it now meant a prolonged struggle up both the roads and a great battle near the town, where there were at least twenty-five guns, and some 20,000 men could easily have been

concentrated; whereas with his long line of communication from Arta to maintain, Manos could not possibly have spared more than half that number for the front, even if he could have neglected Preveza altogether. So we waited in the battery, and about midday a private in our midst suddenly rolled backwards and died, with the big hole of a Martini bullet in his forehead. Some Turk must have crept along the hills to the left of the pass, and taken a fine shot into the thick of us. It seemed the more terrible because it never happened again. Just that one bullet came, and the man died.

The same day, as I was sitting alone in our fortified house, with portcullis down, as it were, and draw-bridge up, I heard knocking at the heavy outer door. At first I took no notice, for Irregulars and soldiers of the line were constantly coming round in the search for bread or tobacco. I had already given away every bit we could spare, and now had only some black bread and a few dry figs left, besides some fragments of chicken which unhappily had developed large numbers of maggots, and for two days to come

it would be impossible to get anything else. But the knocking went on and I noticed the great wolfish dog which had been left in the house and was always ready to tear any stranger in pieces, was now whimpering with joy and pushing his nose under the gate. I shouted "who is there?" and in a voice of depressed resignation came the answer: "I am the owner of this house, if you please." Leaving his family in Arta, the poor man had come back to see how his home was getting on. He was not in the least angry at my presence, but only asked to be allowed to live in his own kitchen. With pride he pointed out the crosses he had painted between the windows in defiance of the Turk. Then he suddenly told me the terrible news that the Greek army in Thessaly was routed, and Larissa was in the hands of the enemy. I had every reason to believe it, and yet I refused. We know now that on that Greek Good Friday night, just after we had lost the Five Wells, the army in Thessaly, believing itself out-generaled at every point, had fled in panic with crowds of the inhabitants from Tyrnavos to Larissa, and had

not even waited to defend the capital. I told the old man to keep the rumour to himself, because it could not be true. But Mavro coming in later said that he too had heard the same story. That night was most miserable. Hour after hour, stretched on my plank bed beside the window, I watched the old stars of Greece glittering with frost, and wondered that the old gods should manage the courses of the stars so well, and the ways of insignificant mankind so badly.

The first rays of sunlight wiped the hoary rime from the grass and rocks, and three hours before the London suburbs were beginning their rush for the morning trains, we were out in the brilliant air. Catching a shepherd, we induced him to milk a sheep into a little bowl for our breakfast, and then I sent Mavro off to Arta to bring up provisions, and discover, if not the truth, at all events the most current report. I myself went down to the old Khan and helped the men who were just going on duty to fill their water-bottles at the well. Then for an hour or two I sat in the battery again with one of the English correspondents, listening to

records of peril in the Pamirs and beside the Upper Nile, and in desert islands on the southern seas. A good deal of loose firing was going on as usual, and now and then we sent a shell whizzing up the pass, but nothing in particular seemed likely to happen. We did not yet despair; the disasters in Thessaly made no military difference to us; and if we could get Janina, it would make a fine set off against Larissa itself. Towards ten o'clock it became too hot to sit still, and I was impelled by a happy instinct to climb the long mountain of ruined and crumbled rock on our right front. I was very anxious to see Pentepegadia itself, and it was evident that from the top one could also look southward right across the Louros plain and over the whole Ambracian Gulf.

The mountain only rose some 2000 feet, or even less, but it completely blocked in our valley on the east, and formed one side of the pass. It was, as I said, one wild mass of bare ruin, varied only by prickly bushes. As I got into the dry ravine of a torrent, I had plenty of difficult climbing. About half way up I came upon



a group of Andarti standing round a nice little wild-boar which they had just shot. As we were admiring the creature and thinking of dinner-time, a bullet came buzzing into our midst, and almost killed the boar again. At the same time the sound of violent firing rose from over the top of the hill, and as I scrambled up the rocks the whole air began again to whine and scream with lead. I could distinguish the deep note of the Turkish Martini, and from time to time, but far more seldom, came the sharp high-pitched crack of the Gras. When at last I reached the crest, I saw what had happened. The two Greek guns which had been posted on the mountain the day I was up the pass, had been withdrawn on the following evening, and now the Turks with renewed courage were endeavouring to drive us from the top of the mountain itself, and so to turn the right flank of our attacking force.

Creeping to the very edge of the crest, I lay down among a group of six Evzoni, who received me with the sweet open-heartedness only to be found in Greeks and Irish. Even from that

splendid position it took me an hour or more to find out exactly the nature of the ground and the forces engaged, for every time I showed even my head against the sky-line the bullets howled over it, and I had to duck down and go quietly on with our work of defensive fortification. As cover, we hastily built up a wall of loose rocks, about twelve feet long and two and a half high, such a wall as they build in the north of England between the windy fields. But in the middle and along the top we left loop-holes for the rifles, and we curved the two ends slightly inwards for protection. While four of us built in turns, the others kept up a carefully-aimed fire whenever the Turks showed themselves. That wall was really a wonderful piece of masonry, and in my old age I should like to go and see if it be still standing. When it was finished we all crept under its shelter and lay down, an Evzonus giving me his brown and hairy cloak to lie on. He also very courteously offered me some lamb's entrails wound round a bit of stick, but by that time I was too thirsty to eat. From half-past eleven onwards for two

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hours the Turkish fire was incessant. It was like the "independent firing" which is so comforting a business just before the enjoyable charge on an Aldershot field-day. We returned the fire whenever it was possible, but as we were against the sky the enemy had a much better sight of us. However, from behind our little wall we could laugh a "Kale ora" (good morning) to the bullets as they flew over our heads. I soon learnt that bullets sing in varied tunes. There was the thin high whistle, like a mosquito, to which no one pays any attention. There was the prolonged moan, nearer at hand—"the wail of a lost spirit," as the novelist would call it. There was the hated wolfish howl, which always seemed to take one on the flank instead of full in front. I think it was due to the Maüser rifle with which some of the Nizam or Line troops in Turkey are now armed. And last of all there was the low ill-tempered burr, as though, in children's language, the nasty thing had got out of bed the wrong way. That was the most terrifying, especially when it struck against our wall or the rocks beside us. And it

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was to that kind only that we politely wished good-morrow.

Little by little I made the position out. The fall of the ground on the further side of the mountain's crest was not deep, and at several points, especially just by our little wall, a determined enemy could have climbed up without much difficulty. We were in fact looking down into a shallow "Punch Bowl" surrounded by a horse-shoe of rocky heights of which we held the western side and rather more than half the curve on the south. Below us was a high plateau of red earth, partly cultivated in little fields and planted with rows of old olives. Beyond this little plain was a grey chaos of rocks and torrent beds which formed the other side of the horse-shoe. Hidden in those rocks and only distinguishable by little puffs of smoke, large numbers of Turks kept up an incessant fire so as to cover the advance of several small and confused groups of soldiers who were trying to creep from point to point across the fields. It was impossible to count numbers. Only one group appeared to be well organised and under

complete control. Their white caps proved them to be Albanians, and they carried the colours, a flag of Turkey red embroidered with the crescent. They were the only men I saw on either side throughout the campaign who recognised the importance of advancing, always advancing in the attack ; but even they, being left unsupported, had to halt under cover at last, and I think they must have kept their wounded with them till it was dark. As for our own long line of defence, extending along that rocky edge or cliff for about a mile and a quarter or rather more, it was held till well on in the afternoon by only a company and a half of Evzoni and a few Andarti from Corfu. This tiny force was distributed in detached groups at intervals of some forty or fifty yards, but it was possible to creep from one group to another under the shelter of the ridge without being exposed to increased danger.

My group of Evzoni was at the southern end of the line, just where the horse-shoe began to curve, but at about one o'clock I began to steal along the edge northward, still

hoping to get a sight of Pentepegadia from the farther end. But just then the Turkish fire increased terribly, and I found that my subconscious self was at its old tricks again and was slowly edging me off down the mountain side. I forced myself to sit still upon a rock, like a ship casting anchor as she drifts towards a lee shore, and there I stayed for a few minutes exposed to dropping bullets all the time. Let no one boast how he will behave in the face of death till he has tried. After a while I remembered I had left my coat in our little fortification, and still I hesitated to go back. Fortunately at that moment I saw the commanding officer of the whole advanced force climbing up the hill with an escort and two mountain guns tied to mules. I went to meet him at once, and walked back to the very edge of the crest at his side. He borrowed my field-glasses, and I showed him the enemy's positions as well as I could. The fire directed upon us was very heavy, and I crouched down to get out of it, but the officer only ducked his head now and then. When he had examined the situation

and done with my glasses, I went for my coat and walked quite at ease along the ridge to the group of Corfu Andarti whom I knew. All sense of fear had entirely vanished, and I only felt a quiet satisfaction at its conquest. I can give no explanation of the sudden panic, still less of the renewal of ordinary calm. I merely mention these peculiar variations of emotion for the advantage of people who wish to know something about the ordinary man's feelings under fire, but are unlikely ever to enjoy the experience themselves.

The Turks meantime had brought up two guns and were shelling our position. This irritated us very much, for we thought ourselves supreme in artillery, but though the shells reached our rocks, they were corrupt and did not burst but just lay there, of little more service than bullets. Very different was the result when at last towards three o'clock our own guns got into position and opened fire. At the first discharge one of the guns ran back and fell over on her side from the recoil. We were all watching her, and the whole line laughed aloud at the sight. That first shot, however,

had an extraordinary effect upon the enemy. The Turks are brave fellows, but the one thing they cannot endure is artillery fire. For the next two hours we enjoyed comparative peace, both sides remaining almost completely hidden under cover. At one moment when the firing had distinctly slackened, I remembered a story of the Highlanders lifting their bonnets on their rifles above a wall in the relief of Lucknow, and taking my hat by the extreme brim I raised it above the rocks to see what would happen. Almost instantly a shower of bullets whizzed over us. I had secretly hoped to get a hole made through it, but at the moment when my hope seemed about to be realised, I hastily brought the hat down. "Pity," I said to myself, "that it should be spoilt. It never defied the Concert of Europe."

For the remainder of the afternoon I was with the group of Andarti from Corfu. They had been out all night in the frost, had only a little cheese to eat, and were half dead of thirst. Far below at our feet we could see men drawing water from the well by the old Khan, but look-



ing at them did us no good. Happily I had kept a little tobacco and a few figs which just went round. I conversed with the two who spoke English—one the leader of the party, a ponderous giant, overwhelmed and staggering under the burden of office, and expressing his sorrows in Titanic groans. As he lay there outstretched upon the rock he was the very model of a Prometheus Bound. The other was a facile and humorous Greek of a commoner type. We discussed the disadvantages of civilisation and the dreariness of city life, persuading each other that we would not at that moment change places with the most comfortable gentleman in the best restaurant off the Strand. At last, in the warmth of the sun and the comparative stillness, only broken by the song of an occasional bullet, they and their men went fast asleep. Then I had leisure to enjoy the view, and certainly no view could well be more beautiful or fuller of human interest. To the north I could see the snowy line of upper Pindus from which I had so lately looked down upon Metsovo. Far beyond were those other snowy cliffs

facing towards Montenegro. Near at hand stood that great mountain of riven stone above Janina. To the south, just where the mountains ended, was Philipiades, named, I suppose, from the Fifth Philip of Macedon. Farther on, beyond the plain, a forked promontory ran out to sea, and half way down it once stood Nicopolis, the City of Victory which Augustus built when the ruin of Antony made him sole master of the world. At the end of the promontory was the strong low rock which sheltered Preveza. Across the little strait stood Actium where the queen of men fled from the battle. A little to the right lay the great mass of Leukas; much farther off, Cephallonia, the home of Byron, rose, round and grey; and one of the lines of hill between the two was actually that rough little island from which Ulysses longed to see the smoke leaping up again. To the right of Leukas was one brief line of open sea, which to us is always the way home.

At about five o'clock the Turks renewed the attack with greater fury than ever, and for all of us the next two hours were the most trying

of the day. Our two guns worked incessantly, and we were reinforced by a few companies of the Line and some Evzoni, but still it was a horrible time, and here and there our fellows began to drop. Just rolling over among the rocks they lay and moaned till one or two comrades were detached to drag them down to the mules which slowly carried them away. One poor fellow, an Evzonus, was very strangely hit. The bullet struck the back of his neck sideways. Throwing his rifle high into the air, he fell in a confused heap and never moved again. I heard afterwards that his spine had been cut right in two. His body was left where it lay. The storm of lead which was sweeping over us made it almost impossible now to look over the edge without almost certain death, and even when taking aim through loop-holes and behind cover, our fellows were becoming very rapid and unsteady in their fire. Soon after six, if the Turks had dared to storm up the slope and come at us with the bayonet, they would certainly have cleared us out. I kept looking at the setting

sun, but he was like a watched pot : I thought he would never set. Yet at half-past six the air was certainly darker, and I knew it would be all over in a few minutes ; for the Turks never fought after sunset. So at last I turned to descend, saying good-night to the Andarti, who were under their Titan's orders to remain in the position till morning. On my way down I met mules coming up with blankets and rations of bread. The firing continued till the sun disappeared, and in passing through a thick and ancient olive wood at the mountain's foot, it was again very alarming to hear the bullets screaming through the branches and cutting off the leaves. A bullet from behind is peculiarly terrifying, no doubt owing to the ancient instinct in the race to turn the front to danger and be watchfully on guard. When at length I was just out of range and was walking quietly over the darkening patch of fields by the Khan, a belated bumble-bee shot humming close by my ear, and even then the sub-conscious self forced me to duck my head.

## CHAPTER XI

### DEFEAT

THE next morning—it was Thursday, April 29th—rose with singular sweetness. Again there had been frost in the night, and when I looked from my fortress window the ground was whitish blue and grey, but all the mountain-tops flamed with the brilliance of the sun. Among the rocks on the lower hills around me I could see the clusters of men in their long blue overcoats just standing up and stretching themselves, and could hear them shouting to each other for water or biscuit. Some of them had here and there lighted crimson little sparks of fire. But for their presence, the country, bare and rugged though it was, was pervaded by the gladness and peace of the Pastoral Symphony. A few goat-bells tinkled gently. A group of peasants in shaggy white with long staves in their hands

stood talking near the courtyard door, and I watched an agile slip of a girl springing about with long brown legs and bewildering rags in chase of a horned sheep, and uttering the self-same cries which the shepherds in Theocritus use, while her cold little feet hardly marked the hoar-frost on the rocks. My interest in the chase was increased because, at the command of my patient host, the girl was trying to bring in that sheep to be milked for my breakfast.

The whole morning was singularly still. Hardly a shot was fired. It is true a Turkish gun or two kept firing at us from time to time as we sat in our battery, but it was only amusing to conjecture how far below us the brown earth would splash up when the shell struck.

Soon after midday I strolled back to my stony little village, hoping that Mavro might have returned with something to eat from Arta. But all was perfectly silent; even Spero had forgotten his terrors, and was fast asleep on the floor wrapt in my rug. I walked

on through the quiet houses, scattered about wherever there was room to build among the steep slopes and the chasms of the water-courses. I found the tiny church—a low and strongly fortified building, with no window at all except a six inch slit in the east end. But as I wandered on, I became gradually aware that the firing had begun again. The sound was coming from beyond the mountain barrier on our right front. The same position as yesterday was evidently being attacked. It was then about half-past three, and every five minutes the noise increased. With my field-glass I anxiously watched the crest of the mountain, which was quite visible for about two-thirds of its length. I saw the Greeks firing in groups, as on the day before, and some were moving uneasily up and down close behind the line. There appeared to be more ordinary soldiers, but fewer Evzoni. Now and then I saw a man suddenly disappear, but whether he was shot or had sunk down for cover I could not distinguish. The suspense of watching them without giving help, or even

being present on the scene, was hardly to be borne. Seeing I had a glass, a knot of shepherds and women gathered round me. "Are the Christians still there?" they kept asking me. "Yes, it's all right," I answered repeatedly; "there's no reason to be alarmed." But, fortunately, in spite of all I could say, most of them set about collecting their flocks and possessions, so as to be ready.

At half-past four there was an enormous increase in the firing—the kind of excited increase which one instinctively knows must precede an attack hand to hand. It was a continuous roar of rifle shot. A few minutes later I saw our two guns being brought hurriedly down on the mules. The groups of defenders along the heights began to look behind them. Like one man they fell back three or four yards, and then some of the groups advanced to the edge again. I afterwards heard that a shout went up, "What shall we do?" and that some officers passed along the word, "Off you go!" Next moment, in long blue lines, they came streaming down



the mountain side, falling headlong, and leaping over the rocks as they came. Hardly had they gone when the crest where we had been began to swarm with black figures, waving their arms, evidently shouting, and firing their rifles at random down into our valley. The thin sound of a trumpet sounded from the topmost height against the setting sun. "That's the Turkish trumpet!" shrieked a poor shepherd woman at my side. She knew it too well. Soon after five the whole mountain top was black with Turks. The devil had again been on the side of the big battalions, and our one chance of conquest was dead.

The shepherds did not wait to hear more. When I looked round they were already gone, and were tying up their belongings in bundles, binding them on the women's backs, gathering in their children, their goats, sheep, cows, chickens, or whatever else most precious they possessed. I walked back to my fortress and found Spero in the courtyard hardly able to speak or stand for terror. He had tied our baggage on to the pony, and tied it wrong.

In hopes of steadying his nerves I took it all off, repacked it correctly, and then turned my glass again upon the mountain. The Turks looked like beetles swarming. I heard afterwards that over 5000 of them were engaged in that assault. They still stood shouting, waving their red flag, and wasting great quantities of ammunition in firing down upon us. Here and there isolated groups were creeping down the rocks, but there appeared to be no organised attempt at pursuit. Having seen enough, I said "Ready," and turned to Spero, but he had made off without me, and leading the pony I quitted the village alone. There was not a soul left in it, and that night it was burnt.

I was not long in overtaking the rear of the general rout. On all sides the unhappy Christians were pouring down the mountains from unsuspected coverts, shouting to each other and urging their flocks forward by firing ball cartridges over their heads. The mountain track was quickly jammed, and movement became very slow. I soon found that our flight would

be utterly unprotected. Taking a last look at our battery I saw the guns had gone, and their train of mules was already hurrying back along the valley. The firing up the pass had ceased, and small mobs of soldiers were crowding off in rear of the guns. Here and there parties of Irregulars in flight looked like shreds of leaves which the wind tosses before the track of a storm. On all the hills around I saw the detachments of the line buckling on their blankets and creeping down one by one to mingle in the herd of fugitives. It would have been difficult for the best troops to have remained unmoved in such a scene. There is nothing so persuasive as the sight of other people running away, and in the crowd and confusion the sense of personal shame was lost.

So in a jumble of soldiers, cattle, and peasants, we moved along the track to Arta. It was most pitiful to see the women crawling without complaint under burdens which almost hid them from view—huge sacks, enormous rolls of bedding, and, very likely on the top

of all, the baby in its wooden cradle. Most carried a chicken or two besides, and iron pots, loaves of bread, and the family petticoats. One woman I saw with a baby lashed on her back and a little brown calf round her neck. Girls crept along the path bent double under their loads. Little children stood by the side screaming with fatigue and perplexity, or scrambled barefoot over the rocky way, driving a kid or lamb, and taking it all as a matter of course that they should be out in the gathering darkness because the Turk was coming. For some distance three little creatures were clinging to the back of my pony, but they could not hold on very well, and their mothers reclaimed them for fear of losing sight of me in the turmoil. At the narrows by Koumzades I was sure a stand would be made. The approach was strongly entrenched, and the trenches were lined with men. There was not the smallest need for the army to retreat a step further. The guns should have taken up a position there, and with the help of even two disciplined battalions they could have held that

pass for ever. Yet, even as we came through, I saw the men walking out of the trenches and squeezing into the mob in their passion for escape. Their officers were quite incapable of holding them, and, indeed, made little effort. Panic had fallen upon them all, and, as the old Greeks thought, there is something super-human in panic, something distinct from the spirit of each man, and infinitely more powerful. Still I could not think that such a position would be abandoned without a shot, and, as I came upon Mavro waiting for me there on his way back with the provisions from Arta, I wrapt myself in a rug and went to sleep among the rocks. But we had not been there more than an hour or so when somebody kicked over us, and shouted that there was not a soldier between us and the Turks. The same thing happened further down at the old building of Khanopoulos, where a few guns were still standing, and the crowds of fugitives pouring in across the top of the marsh from Philipiades made the road almost impassable. We had hardly arranged our little encampment when

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we saw the guns depart, and we were left without defence.

Thus alarms continually renewed drove the rout onward. It was pitch dark, but warm, and fortunately dry. The remainder of the road has the stony hills of Grimbovo and Imaret on one side, and on the other an unwholesome marsh over which the fire-flies and will-o'-the-wisp were dancing in every direction. From end to end the line of retreat was fully exposed to artillery and infantry fire, and had the Turks pursued with energy they might have enjoyed a massacre such as their soul loves, right away up to Arta bridge, and have entered the town without losing a man. But after Koumzades I did not hear a rifle fired behind us, and there was really no pursuit all. So through the obscurity we stumbled along the road, lighted only by the malign glare from Philipiades which had again been kindled into flame. From time to time a block of cavalry or the guns stopped the movement altogether, and at two places where water wells up from the rock and flows across the road, there was a terrible struggle,

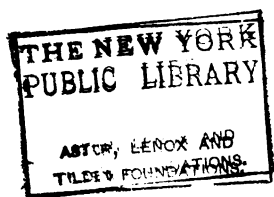
men and children and animals all trampling into the springs in their frantic thirst. At last the faint smell of orange blossom on the air showed that we were approaching Arta. At about three o'clock we forced our way across the steep and narrow bridge, which from end to end was one wriggling mass of soldiers, guns, fugitives, and beasts. In their perplexity many of the goats leapt over the low parapets, and fell with a splash into the blackness below. In the town the panic had already begun. The post and telegraph were packing up, and scores of Irregulars were fluttering away southward. Passing through the main street we came to a little open space by the bend of the river, and then lay down again in hopes of sleep. But a cavalry piquet came clattering up and chose the self-same spot for their encampment. They tied the horses up and stretched themselves beside us. Again I thought sleep might be possible, but a great horse kept snuffing and snorting at my head, my stallion made unrequited advances to one of the mares, and soon the gradual dawn began to reveal the strange and sleeping figures

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BRIDGE OF ARTA





around me. That morning Spero demanded his wages, and fled away into Pindus. His place was taken by a stone-mason from Ætolia, who had come out as an Irregular to get a little shooting, and for some reason attached himself to me on the retreat.

For the next few days we settled down to despair. On the river-beach beside the bridge stands an enormous plane-tree, on which, in the good old times when the Turks ruled in Arta, they used to hang the patriot Greeks as warnings. Under that tree a group of officers was always gathered, listlessly watching the flocks and terrified peasants who still choked the road. They gave no order, they made no attempt to muster or rally a single company. They simply let things drift, and backwards and forwards through the town things drifted. The soldiers roamed the streets in gesticulating and angry crowds. Every day I crossed the bridge and visited the extreme outposts, but every day my ride became shorter, till on the Monday (May 3rd) I saw the whole body form up and retire into the town. I followed in great despond-

ency, and believe I was the last man to quit the Turkish soil. Yet the Turks had made no attempt to pursue or attack, and when that day for the first time I had seen them again they were only swarming about in Philipiades and Strevena, from six to ten miles away.

On Sunday the Greek artillery had been replaced in position on the hill above the town. We began to speak of defence, and listened eagerly to vague rumours of success in Thessaly, which must have been due to the first battle of Velestino, when Smolenski proved what a real soldier could do with Greeks. But all news was in reality stopped, and on our side we were not allowed to telegraph or even to register letters. To check the knowledge of disasters, the authorities kept all letters in the office for ten days, and my telegrams were returned to me in a batch after a week's interval. Though our position seemed to be no worse than at the beginning of the war, our men had lost heart, and were utterly demoralised by apprehension and inactivity. They lay in the trenches day and night, with nothing to do but curse their

officers, or strip themselves naked in the vain effort to reduce the insect life with which they swarmed. It often rained hard, especially at night, and they woke stiff and ill with damp. They were wearied, too, by marching and counter-marching up and down the lines, and their nerves were kept continually on the stretch by rumours of Turkish assaults. Saluting, never punctilious, now entirely ceased. Many openly announced their intention of never coming under fire again. On every side one heard the words, "We are betrayed"—the pardonable excuse of the defeated. When off duty, the men crept into the large deserted houses beside the river to sleep, or loitered in careless uniforms about the streets and into the hills, searching for a little wine or something to eat. Meanwhile the condition of the town and the country round it grew daily worse. The few who could afford to escape had gone, trailing off southward on any kind of wheels that would go round. Only the soldiers and the poor were left, but within the town itself they numbered some 20,000 souls, I suppose. There was plenty of flesh

to eat. You could buy a large lamb for the value of a shilling, and a hen for sixpence. The shepherds were only too glad to sell at any price, for the soldiers plundered their flocks unmercifully. But bread was very scarce, and large crowds used to wait shouting outside the bakers' ovens. Salt ran out; there was no fruit or vegetable of any kind, and little to drink but the turbid river water and a few stagnant wells. In the crush and terror of the retreat hundreds of sheep and goats died, or were pushed into the ditches and drowned. Their bodies lay thick along the road across the bridge, and for a day or two scores of women were engaged in plucking the hair and wool off the carcasses for future use. But that industry soon ceased. Over all the town such a stench of putrefication and crowded humanity mingled with the orange-blossom of the orchards, that I can never venture to a wedding again. It seemed as though a pestilence, a mutiny, or a massacre were the only things that could possibly happen now.

On the other hand, the behaviour of the

peasant refugees was both encouraging and pathetic. Innumerable families had, as I said, broken through into the flat orange orchards between the bridge and the town, and made themselves quite at home, clustered beneath the miniature shade of every tree, in indistinguishable groups of babies, lambs, goats, and mothers, all huddled together in cheerful family feeling. Innumerable others had wandered down the river, or far along the main road, and pitched their tiny camps under olive-trees, or in the mountain rocks, where the goats could find pasture, whilst the cows and horses were turned loose among the standing crops. I saw a great deal of them, for twice a day I had to take my own horses into the corn to eat their fill of the harvest, since no fodder was to be bought. By noonday after the retreat, I noticed that the women had collected fuel, and, as at a distressful picnic, little columns of smoke were rising from unaccustomed hearths. In the evening I saw them thumping their rags in the water of the ditches, wringing and lathering for their very

lives, or rocking the cradles under the stars. It all seemed the most natural thing in the world. Through danger and overturn, with unwearied continuance, the little round of life had to go on. Sometimes the women cried quietly to themselves, when the ropes of their bundles cut their breasts as they trudged onward; but I never heard them complain. If they could keep the family and their bits of things together, they were fairly content. When you fight the Turk, all this sort of thing is an inevitable part of the business. We heard much of Turkish atrocities during the war, much of slaughtered villages north of Preveza, and of the women of Kamarina, who threw themselves from cliffs. It was impossible to know whether such stories were true. But no further evidence of the Turk's nature was needed, than the behaviour of those refugees who sought to escape his vengeance by their flight. It shows what they expected, and people do not ruin themselves for nothing.

For myself, driven from the town by insects and smells, I lived about in the fields hard by,

generally in some deserted tent, which the peasants had not the good luck to discover. After a few days, finding that neither letters nor telegrams were leaving Arta, I made a dash southward to reach the post at Patras. I shall not forget the joy of that brief holiday—the cool sweet wind that was blowing from the south-west on the early May morning when we started, the waters of the gulf splashing at our feet at a sudden turn of the road, the cleansing swim out into the free waves, the look of the mountains across the water, gleaming with sun and shower, almost like British hills. Karavassera, a pretty blue and white village at the end of a deep inlet or loch, was then the hospital base of the army; and in one of the hospitals were three English nurses, who received me into a ward with refreshing welcome, and showed me the marvels among the wounded—the man who was shot transversely through both hips at the bridge of Arta, and only felt pain just below his right knee; the other, who had received in his mouth a bullet which passed



out at the top of the shoulder-blade ; an Irregular who was shot through both jaws that day when we held the mountain crest so long ; and a boy whose cheek had been slit from nose to ear by a bullet at Pentepegadia. A good many Turks were there also, found in abandoned Turkish hospitals, or taken prisoners on the field. They were all pervaded by a peculiarly infidel smell, which the Greeks think arises from their want of the sacred oil at baptism. They all struggled to rise when I entered, saluting me by laying their hands upon their hearts, their mouths, and foreheads. Except that the nurses had great difficulty to induce them to drink water, which they supposed must of necessity be poisoned, they were good patients, lying perfectly still, and never asking for anything. During the most frightful sufferings, they kept the same silent and immovable gaze. It was like the stare of some unearthly wild animal, quite inhuman and emotionless, a perplexing mixture of aloofness, terror and hate. The Greeks were good patients too, suffering

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extreme pain with a stoical endurance rather surprising in so emotional and expressive a people. I think I visited every hospital in Epirus and afterwards in Athens, and the testimony of the nurses never varied, both as to this self-restraint, and the readiness with which the wounds healed in bodies purified by open-air life, and quite free from alcohol.

But to me a matter of greater marvel than the wounded was the presence of our English nurses in such surroundings. I tried to imagine the sense of wonder and contrast in the mind of a Turk, or some peasant Greek from the fields, as he watched those fair-haired women moving about so freely and unabashed in their clean caps and blue gowns and broad white collars, big red cross and all, and then remembered his own poor household at home in its rags and dirt and servility. After what I myself had seen that little Red Cross hospital appeared a fairy palace of cleanliness and beauty ; yet the nurses themselves were not satisfied. What are you to do with patients (they asked appealingly) who violently object to having their beds made or

their clothes put straight, and who habitually in their own homes go to sleep without undressing? As to washing even so much as the patients' feet, all such ideas had to be given up, partly in deference to national prejudice, partly, I think, for other reasons.

Two days later, with a sense of escaping from a cave into daylight, I emerged from Acarnania and Ætolia into the sunshine of the Corinthian Gulf, and again beheld Patras basking in midday heat under the snowy rampant of Erymanthus.

## CHAPTER XII

### GRIMBOVO

AT Patras everyone thought the war was over. We all gave ourselves up to the joy of security and animal delight, in the midst of splendid sunshine and abundance of things to eat. And so it happened that one afternoon I was sitting with the French Consul and two or three correspondents who had known the miseries of Arta, in a garden blowing by the sea, whilst in the eucalyptus and pomegranates above our heads a nightingale sang to the rose of her old passion. It was May 11th, and as I sat there a deep instinct kept urging me to go back to the cheerless region we had left. When I spoke of it, everyone cried that to return would be an artistic sin. But that voice persisted, and gave me no rest until, consigning artistic virtues to another sphere, I arose from the wine and luxurious converse, and was carried across the mouth of the Gulf, out of

the sunshine back into the grey and purple storms which lay brooding over the Ætolian shore.

The memory of all that three days journey of return remains in my mind with peculiar distinctness. That region of Ætolia and the Acarnanian bays is a strange and almost unknown land.\* Nourished by long lakes and brimming water-courses which flow through forests of ilex and the dark valonia oak, it is different in character from the rest of Greece, and its history has been different too. The gods were there early, and left it late, but they did not love it much; or perhaps because they loved it they gave it little fame, reserving it as an uncultured retreat for their immortality of discredited age. The dwellers in its mountains and slips of plain were cut off from the rest of Greece, and spoke dialects almost as rude as a barbaric tongue. Yet there between the mountains and the sea is Calydon, to which Atalanta came, and beside the

\* An excellent account of Ætolia has, however, since been published by Mr W. J. Woodhouse, who was there in 1892 and 1893. (*Clarendon Press*, 1897).

flat lagoon at Mesolonghi lies the heart of the last of the Titans. About four hours ride from the plentiful village of Agrinion, where the women still show some traces of southern beauty, you come upon the full torrent of that old Achelous, which I had known far up among the gorges of Pindus; and but a mile or two beyond the river the narrow road is almost barred by the remains of massive walls and gates, the ruins of an old Greek city which moulders there untouched. A shepherd told me its name was Stratos; and at the word a passage in Thucydides came dimly back to my mind. For does he not tell how a detachment of Athenians once tried to penetrate into Ætolia, and at some place called Stratos were surrounded by the semi-barbarians, and destroyed? This then was the scene. Here those bright Athenians, who had heard Pericles and watched the Parthenon building, looked their last upon the sun. Here they were surrounded and destroyed.

Then the road became still more desolate, passing at first over a wide uncultivated plain of scrub and marshy reeds, in which a few

nightmare buffaloes were wallowing, and then through miles of forest land with glades leading up over mountain cliffs to other untrodden valleys and mountains beyond—a region fit for mediæval adventures or the more sombre of Boccaccio's tales. In the evening of the second day, after skirting a long and shallow lake which has no outlet, I crossed a low watershed, and came suddenly again upon the corner of the Ambracian Gulf and Karavassera with its hospitals. That night I slept on a restaurant table which I secured by a certain selfishness and pride of race, and from that point of vantage I looked down upon a floor deeply strewn with the breathing forms of some forty or fifty Irregulars. Whether any of those who were sleeping around me died next day I never discovered, but for that night, at least, they slept like the dead, and very unearthly they looked as they lay side by side, their rifles under their heads, their shining cartridges wound across their chests, and their short petticoats sending up a rare savour of the fat with which they were carefully greased.

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At the first sign of light among the stars, we were all up and out in the pellucid air. The Irregulars crowded hastily into a tiny war-ship which was to carry them across the Gulf, and I pushed forward along the main road mile after mile towards Arta, under a sky like ivory, so smooth and cool. On one side of me the deep purple waves just lapped and gurgled with breaking crests against the rocks, and on the right, far away in front, the growing crimson of morning gradually revealed the snows of Pindus. The birds woke up; black-headed gulls laughed along the shore; and eagles rose in spiral circles without a movement of their breadth of wing, till the hidden sun touched them and they shone against the blue like discs of gold. At one place I caught sight of the iridescent blues and greens of a bee-eater, and farther on a pair of huge pelicans were floating upon a white lagoon, and at the sound of the horses vanished down the purple west with their heavy and powerful flight. Just over their heads the sun touched the cliffs above Preveza,



and at the same moment the great gun from its fortress boomed over the water, and from the Nicopolis of Augustus I heard the far-off mutter of rifles and saw a thin smoke rising up.

After the road left the sea to run straight for Arta along the wide valley, from holes and corners of the rocks on either side, or from beaten circles in the standing crops, browned and hungry faces peered at me as I passed along. On the highway itself I met more and more of these unhappy refugees all hurrying southward to escape. The women's outlandish dress, their rags of heavy purples and reds clawed together by large silver clasps, and their obeisance with hands laid on their breasts showed me they came from far over the Turkish border, and both women and girls, and sometimes men, had the cross tatooed in blue on their foreheads and the backs of their hands—one of the means by which the Christians still enslaved in Epirus defy their masters. From their numbers and haste I saw that some new fear possessed them, and

when at last, under the full blaze of the midday sun, we went stumbling over the mediæval pavement of Arta again, I found the smell of orange blossom indeed still heavy on the air, and the innumerable brown hawks still chasing flies like swallows, and screaming from roof to roof; but the long lines of trenches were empty now, and on the steps of the Byzantine Cathedral the old men, the women, and the young were crowded like mediæval Italians during some battle outside a city's wall. Their eyes were fixed in silent anxiety upon certain blue lines and patches which were slowly moving up that slip of green plain just across the river by Gremenitza into the rough grey hills beyond. Suddenly, as I passed, they all crouched down and drew in their breath as a shell from our big gun beside the barracks went shrieking over our heads to burst among the Turks nearly three miles away.

It was the afternoon of May 13th. Crossing the bridge into Turkish territory again I soon came upon the main army distributed in lines

of battalions, some on the plain looking towards Philipiades, and some on the hills of Imaret. The men were in the highest spirits. They saluted their officers again, and lifted their feet on the march instead of trailing them through the dust. For they had now come under the spell of that word "Forward." An order for a general advance in three divisions had been given, in hope of driving the Turks once more out of the Louros valley. A few regular troops with a swarm of Andarti, two guns, and a girl to lead them had been landed near Nicopolis, as I had seen, to keep in check the garrison of Preveza. Another force was attacking a bridge over the Louros below Philipiades, and the main army was to clear out the enemy from some strong entrenchments which they had thrown up on the mountains just south of Koumzades, between the old buildings of Khanopoulos and the little mountain village of Grimbovo, or Gribovo, as perhaps we ought to write it. It was a task of immense difficulty. The Turkish positions lay along the crests of successive hills, from about 800 feet at the lowest up to about



SCENE OF THE BATTLE OF GRIMBOVO  
*Sketched from Arta, looking North*

- A** One of the Turkish forts of Imaret occupied by Greeks May 12th, and entrenched on retreat of May 16th.  
**B** River Arachton, running in channels along broad stony bed; too deep to ford comfortably.  
**C** Position of 6th Regiment before advance.  
**D** Deserted village of Gremenzitza.  
**E** Two guns protecting advance from rear.  
**F** Greek position in centre after advance.  
**G** Hill in centre, strongly occupied by Turks.  
**G1** Hill with earthwork on left, strongly occupied by Turks; key of position near the mountain village of Grimbovo.  
**H** Furthest point of advance of Greek line, abandoned early May 16th; no deep gap between H and G1, scene of Greeks' heaviest loss.  
**I** Main road to Philippiades runs on the other side of these hills, with deep marsh on west.  
**J** Two guns shelling G1.  
**K** Attempt of Turks to turn our right.  
**L** Mountain behind which is Koumsades and pass to Pentepegadia.

ASTOR, LENOX AND  
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS.

2000 feet on one of the highest points above Koumzades. In front of each earthwork the enemy had a gently sloping ground which, as was proved at St Privat and Plevna, is known to be the best possible of all defences. And even if our men gained the positions, they were only fighting for what had been ours almost without a blow three weeks before. On the other hand our big guns at Arta and Peta could throw common shell or shrapnel into nearly all the entrenchments, and we had three mountain batteries besides to protect our advance ; whereas the Turkish artillery was weak, though they had eighteen guns at Philipiades, a battery near Strevena, and a few feeble mountain guns up in the hills.

After visiting the foremost line of our men, who were lying down in good order among the rocks, I stood beside two of our guns which were shelling the Turkish position just in front of us. But unfortunately the Turkish artillery at Strevena managed to get our elevation exactly, and threw a shell plump into the middle of us whenever they wished. We would see the

puff of white smoke from their guns, and at the same instant we heard the tearing noise of the shell as it rushed towards us on its invisible course. All of us lay down flat, except a veteran Englishman, who as a peculiar precaution turned up his coat collar. Nearer and nearer came the shrieking thing till it ended in a loud report and a shower of earth and stones and lumps of iron. When all was quiet we stood up again and watched for another. During this exciting episode a young Englishman came up, and though we warned him of the danger insisted on going forward in front of our guns down the side of the hill and so had his cap swept off by the wind of a shell which whirled it high in the air like a dead leaf. But it is noticeable that I saw no one wounded by artillery fire throughout the war, and only one man killed. He, poor fellow, had his head split in half by an iron fragment. Otherwise the effect of the guns though very terrifying, was not dangerous. Later on, when our own guns had been withdrawn under the shelter of the ridge, and were quite out of the enemy's sight, it was very

interesting to find that whenever I showed myself standing up in my mackintosh on our old position, the Strevena artillery, supposing that I was an officer on the look-out, invariably just sent a shell up to keep things quiet, and it was consoling to think what an amount of good or bad Turkish money they were throwing away upon a solitary stranger.

But from a slightly higher knoll just behind our guns one had a still better view of the whole prolonged contest on both sides of the hill, and it was there I stayed for the greater part of the next two days. At the beginning the interest lay almost entirely with those blue lines and patches which were gradually advancing up the greenish bit of plain between Gremenitza and the hills. They had two guns with them, and the two on their left where I was standing, helped them to some extent. They were the 6th regiment, about 2000 men, and as they advanced they extended by companies in admirable order and went forward in successive lines, taking cover where they could, but not clinging to it too long. In



going down a path into a steep transverse gully of a stream, one company got bunched up, and many were left there on the ground. But the ambulance bearers kept moving backwards and forwards across the plain with the stretchers, and showed great courage. That was at half-past three, and soon afterwards our advance up the centre of the plain was checked by a force of Turks, which, though almost detached from their main body, persisted in holding the crest of a rounded hill of rocks and small shrubs just facing us. Both sides kept trying to turn the further flank, but in vain. So our men went steadily up to a lower ridge in front of the Turkish position, and there remained, neither side being able to move though a ceaseless fire was kept up.

Almost immediately followed the most important movement of the day. The ridge of hills on which I stood ran, as I said, from the mountains above Koumzades due south to the powerful old Turkish battery of Imaret overlooking the river and Arta beyond. It was a series of gradually diminishing heights, six or

perhaps seven in all with shallow dips or valleys between. The Turks held the four northernmost with strong entrenchments, and now a battalion of the 6th regiment began to climb the very steep slope to their left from the plain of Gremenitza, whilst our foremost firing line, already on the hills, advanced till both forces converged in a joint attack upon the nearest Turkish lines on the fourth height from the top. It was strange to see that battalion advancing into the certain danger, for I had visited them hardly more than an hour before, and had been recognised by an officer who was on the mountain-crest by Pentepegadia. Day and night for a month he had been exposed to all weathers and every danger. He probably had not changed his uniform, and had been perpetually short of food. He had stood under fire for more days than I for hours. Yet he had the spirit for compliment: "*Toujours dans la première ligne, monsieur?*" he said, "*Vous êtes un homme de bon courage.*"

"*Et vous, monsieur?*" was all I could reply.

He laughed, and turned to his men. I do not know whether he was killed that afternoon, but I never saw him again. The assault was led by Major Ieroiannes (pronounced Yero-yannis), whom I knew as one of the bravest officers in Greece. He came through without a hurt. The men advanced with splendid steadiness in widely extended order, firing volleys by sections. Except that the ground was all rocky and that the slope was sometimes steep enough to conceal them, there was no cover, and many dropped among the grey stones. Still on the blue lines went, whilst the big guns at Arta and the two small guns beside me kept sending shell and shrapnel into the Turkish line. Suddenly I noticed the enemy's ridge of smoke begin to fade and clear away. Next minute the black figures of Turks were seen hastening back up the rocky slope behind, falling down in their hurry and scrambling off again on all fours, or turning round to fire, but so wildly that the bullets went singing far over my head. I fancied I could hear our men cheer as with a

quick rush they came up to the entrenchments and began firing over them at the fugitives. In the trenches, as I heard afterwards, they found many dead Turks, and it was characteristic of Turkish thrift that all the bodies had been stripped to their drawers before the position was abandoned.

That was our moment of success. I think if four or five good battalions had been sent up then to reinforce the attack, we should have chased the enemy out of the Louros valley again. But nothing was sent. Our firing line, exhausted with excitement and the long climb, lay down in the earthworks and contented themselves with keeping up a steady fire against the top of the ridge beyond. So the battle remained when the sun set and gradually all was still. Our English veteran made an offer to some of the Head-quarter Staff to rush the position with 700 Evzoni in a night attack. I think we would all have gone with him. But the answer was that night attacks were contrary to the art of war. So we crept under any shelter we could find, and went to sleep.

All that night the rain fell heavily, and when I looked out just before sunrise the tops of all the mountains were covered with masses of heavy cloud. The men, who had remained out in their positions, were soaked through, and much dispirited. But with the first light the firing was renewed, and the battle continued all that day without a pause, and almost without a change. When I reached my point of observation on the hill-top beside our battery I found that the lines of attack and defence were unaltered, except that the Turks had strengthened their position on the edge of a rocky spur which ran down from the hills into the main-road far below us on our left. From there they prevented any possible advance along the road, and continually threatened to advance themselves. To check this movement a full Greek battalion was deployed upon the plain across the road, and kept up a steady fire, lying down in extended order. About 300 yards behind them there was a battery of six guns, hard at work. But neither artillery nor infantry could advance owing to a deep marsh

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in their front, and could get no cover against the pitiless rifle fire from the rocky and fortified spur, except a very low bank, which only sufficed for a company or so. They were also shelled by five guns which the Turks had now posted near Strevena, and though it was pleasing to see that the shells nearly always splashed into the marsh in front of them or fell with a harmless puff and spurt of earth into the ploughed land in their rear, yet the shrapnel which sometimes burst with a flash over their heads disquieted them a good deal, and all day long they lay there in about the most terrible position which troops have to endure, exposed to a double fire, and unable to advance or make any effective return. The ambulance was very busy there, but the dead were not carried away, because it was not worth while for the bearers to run the extreme risk on their account.

Towards ten o'clock, as I was trying to make out through the drenching rain what was likely to happen next, I perceived a movement of the enemy which I had been expecting for some time with anxiety. Opposite our extreme right

the ground at the foot of the mountains was scored by deep ravines and covered with patches of fir-trees and scrubby bushes among the rocks. There were, however, two or three long open spaces like glades, and across one of these I suddenly saw a few black specks moving rapidly and disappearing into the trees beyond. I watched intently and in a few minutes saw another batch pass in the same way. Then they came more frequently, sometimes one or two men at a time, and in another minute twenty or more, all running and scrambling for their lives. I could no longer doubt they were trying to turn our right. At that moment an Aide-de-Camp whom I knew came riding up to where I stood, and said with a very serious look: "Our losses are terrible. Have you noticed any movement of the enemy?"

I pointed out to him what I had seen. He watched for a few minutes, and then with a word of thanks galloped off to the Staff. Before half-an-hour had gone, I saw some 500 or 600 Evzoni thrown into the rugged ground still further to the right, and the advance of

the Turks in that direction was checked. We know now from evidence on the other side that those Evzoni very nearly succeeded in turning the whole Turkish position, and if only we had rolled the Turk back beyond Janina, I should have had reason to be proud.

After that, all movement practically ceased, and the two sides lay pumping lead at each other to see which would give in first. But neither moved: men do not give in from being fired at. It is only the advance that shakes them. Hour after hour from eleven o'clock till dark, I watched that horrible and purposeless slaughter. Rain fell in torrents, the whole sky was hung with lowering clouds, all the mountain tops were hidden, and along the crests of all the ridges the smoke of rifles and artillery hung unmoved in fringes of thin white mist. Soon after midday, and again at five o'clock, the roll of the musketry was redoubled as though an assault with the bayonet was intended. It was in the second onset that Colonel Yianopoulos, the commander of the 6th, was killed by a bullet in his mouth as



he rode fearlessly forward, right up to the enemy's rifles, cheering on his men to the charge. Had that advance been driven home, we know now that every Turk would have fled. But just afterwards, large reinforcements of Nizam or regular troops came up, and we had no such chance again.

The only other variety was watching the success of the shells thrown by our big guns at Arta and Peta. One could hear them whizzing up from far behind; they screamed over our heads, and passed far away with a muttering noise to the front. Then would come the great splash of dark earth. Sometimes the wall of an entrenchment would be split open, and we could see the Turks bustling about like disturbed ants, and building it up again. All the time the Turkish officers kept walking up and down. Sometimes they would spring for a moment on the parapet, perhaps to encourage their men, perhaps to judge the distance better. On the farthest ridge hundreds of Turks were clustering, and hastening to and fro, one could not understand

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why. Sometimes I tried to follow the movements of one man, but he would suddenly disappear or become confused with others, and as it slowly grew darker, all that could be seen was tongues of orange flame in row after row, spurting out of the mist. All the time the rain beat upon the ground, and the roar of death never ceased. In the gathering gloom it still went on, and always the scattered lines of stretchers kept creeping back towards the town, bearing someone who moaned and screamed, or someone who lay quite still.

A few incidents nearer at hand have stayed in my mind, and a few fragments of conversation, that came as into a dream and passed out again, I could not say when. For a long time an old peasant in a brownish-white cloak sat at my side and stared into the smoke before him, resting his chin upon his crook. Two of his sons were in the firing line up there on the hill. He vanished, and soon afterwards, I think at the moment of the five o'clock assault, an officer passed with some foreign journalist, "C'est charmant, n'est-ce-pas, mon-

sieur, charmant!" cried the journalist, and with the habitual politeness of the Greek, the officer refrained from spitting in his face. For about half-an-hour I went back along the hills to see if reinforcements were coming up. In the shelter of the hollows I found knots of peasants and townspeople, come out to see the battle, or because they had relations engaged. I remember one little creature of about six running in despair from group to group, calling, "Father, father, where are you?" whilst the tears seemed to well out of his little body. Someone gave him an orange, hoping to make him forget his father for a while, but I do not know whether it did, for I lost sight of him in the crowd.

At last the mercy of night put an end to the day, and feeling like the Man of Crime when at last the Prussian cannon were quiet at Sedan, I lay down in an empty tent and tried to sleep. I saw that as advance was impossible retreat must come. And so it happened, for just after daybreak on Saturday May 15th I found the Greeks retiring from

the advanced positions on the hills and concentrating round the Turkish batteries on Imaret, which sappers were strengthening with entrenchments. If the Turks had attacked, they could have chased us into the town and probably out of it. But they are always slow in following up an advantage. I could see them stealing gradually down to the positions we had abandoned, and hanging about in groups searching for the dead. Now and then their evident excitement told us that they had found some bodies and were fighting over the clothing as they tore it off. From time to time a gun at Arta sent a shell into their midst, and it was good to see them scurrying away from their disgusting work. But for the rest of the day they continued to line all the heights in great numbers, blowing their trumpets and shouting, though not daring to advance.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE TRUCE

It cannot be computed with any accuracy how many were killed on either side at Grimbovo in that two days battle. The number of wounded reported at the hospitals on Friday night was 600, but there must have been far more altogether. The one Englishman who was with the Turks says he counted 476 dead bodies of Greeks opposite the Turkish left alone.\* That would bring the Greek killed up to nearly 1000, but as I think there were not more than 10,000 Greeks engaged, that estimate is probably too high. I believe myself that about 300 killed and 1000 wounded would be fairly near the mark, perhaps rather under than over. The Turkish official loss was 192 killed and 366 wounded, but that

\**With the Turkish Army in Epirus.* By Capt. C. B. Norman (United Service Magazine : October 1897).

is called a "mild estimate" by their own side.

And in the afternoon of that Saturday, whilst we still held the heights of Imaret, we buried the dead—those of them who had been brought down, for many were left, and many were buried by the sappers on the field. The cemetery is about half a mile from the town at the foot of the hills on the west of the main road running to Agrinion and the Gulf. A section of sappers was at work on the graves early in the afternoon under the encouragement of the chief priest, who took a service in the chapel whenever two or three bodies had come up (or a separate service for an officer) and in the intervals hurried on the digging, smoking cigarettes the while. The graves were only 2 ft. 6 in. deep—not nearly so deep as the rubbish pits in a British camp, but the sappers worked sulkily and slow, for they belonged to that 10th regiment which had been very unfortunate, and as they maintained, unfairly exposed throughout the war. The rumour had indeed got about that their losses

were due to breaches of the vow of chastity which the men had all taken for as long as the war lasted. One may imagine to what gibes and insinuations such a rumour would give rise, so that the regiment was irritated past endurance. But it had really been under fire more than the others. As I noticed before, it consisted of Corfiotes and Islanders, musical and impulsive people, more like Italians than Greeks, and they now boldly announced their intention of forsaking Greece and petitioning for English government again. The result of all which was that the graves were not ready for the dead when the dead arrived.

The private soldiers were carried out covered by their blankets upon stretchers still sticky and horrible with their blood. They were laid in the trench dressed in their uniforms without the coat. Their shirts were ragged and filthy with the campaign, their bare feet stuck out through holes in their shoes, and sometimes showed remnants of socks which perhaps had been in decent repair when they left home. Their hands and feet were tied with cords or

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handkerchiefs, as is customary throughout Greece, I think to prevent the ghost walking. No one had stood by to close their eyes, nor was any there to mourn them, but somewhere else they would be mourned—in Elis, or Ithaca, or Sparta, and it may be that, like the warrior in Virgil, some remembered dear Argos as they fell. Between two and three dozen of them were laid side by side in a row as soon as the trench was big enough, and the earth was quickly shovelled over their faces. The ten officers had separate graves. They were carried out in ramshackle little coffins of black canvas, the lids, adorned with great white crosses, being borne in front of them like flags. Bay leaves and odd bits of flowers were laid on the bodies, and their wounds were concealed by tufts of cotton wool. Nearly all had been shot in the head. I knew four or five of them by sight from meeting them in the streets or at the front. They were dressed in their blood-stained uniforms, almost as ragged and dirty as their men's. In the chapel two priests chanted psalms and prayers over them with the Orthodox whine and quaver. One of



the officers had two brothers following him. Over Colonel Yianopoulos of the 6th regiment, a few privates wept as I could well wish some soldier or comrade Knight of the Holy Spirit to weep over me. The others were unmourned.

When prayers were finished and incense burnt, there was a long wait till General Manos arrived with his staff. He was received by a company of red-shirted Italians, who had been trying in the interval to learn how to present arms. After some declamation and argument, the graves were then cut big enough to let the officers' coffins down, and there was a welcome silence whilst the General stood forward to speak. He was a small grey-bearded man, with mournful and harassed eye, and manners of invincible politeness. He spoke briefly, with true soldierly feeling, but in words quite inaudible. Others followed with far greater eloquence and the gestures of born elocutionists. It is easy to be unjust to races who find so great consolation in rhetoric, but I could not help remembering that other burial at the beginning of a war involving principles certainly not more important than

that which was just ended, when Pericles praised those who had shown themselves brave not in word only but in deed ; and for the first time I seemed to understand why it was that the best of the Greeks had insisted so strongly on the importance of that well-known distinction.

As the troops were on duty in the town there was no firing, and before the speeches were over I turned away. Near the cemetery gate I found two women, who, quite unconcerned by the neighbouring eloquence, were raking the mould on a new grave into order with their fingers, whilst a prudent little girl was stealing the rough white stones from another mound and arranging them at the head of this. I asked if it was a husband or father killed in the war. No, it was the grandfather, a very old man, but yet he had been killed by the war ; for the army had taken away his favourite mule to carry ammunition, and the loss had broken his heart, so that he seemed to wither away, and now was buried.

As I walked back to the town the mountains and river and distant view were full of a fresh

and sunny beauty after the rain, whilst noble masses of cloud moved slowly eastward, leaving the sky bare. I thought of the many men so beautiful who, but for the battle of yesterday, would still behold the beauty of the world, and as I lay awake at night thinking of these things, I heard the rumble of guns coming back over the Arachtos, across the triple wave of that ancient bridge, and knew at once that the army had abandoned all the positions for which their lives had been lost, and was again in full retreat into the town. By Sunday morning there was scarcely a Greek soldier left on the other side of the river. And on Sunday afternoon came a sudden report that the Turks were assaulting the bridge. Instantly the population and soldiers alike started off on the mad run of panic, the worst panic I saw, but also the shortest. For an officer standing at a corner of the road performed the incalculable service of shooting at three soldiers as they ran, and the panic ceased ; but not before the guards of the prison had been infected by it, and bolted, allowing the prisoners to resume the full enjoyment of

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their liberty, which they did without hesitation.

I had now found my last and best quarters in the beautiful but unhappy town. It was a room in a tiny blue and white house down in the unfrequented quarter close beside the river. Vast deserted gardens with high walls stood around it, all reduced to wilderness and filth by the army. It was owned by two old ladies and an invisible man, who had all escaped from the Turkish oppression in Janina some years before. The room had a table, two planks to sleep on, and innumerable pictures of the saints, so that I felt quite civilised again. In the stone entrance there was even a tap of water, and I was allowed to wash upon the door-steps. My window had a beautiful view over the murmuring currents and whirlpools of the river on to the hills of Imaret and the whole of the battle-field. In the clear still air of the Sunday evening I could see thin blue columns of smoke rising from all the positions on the hills where the fighting had been most severe. The Turks had there scraped the dead together, soaked

them in petroleum, and were burning them with heaps of wet brushwood among the rocks. Probably they only burnt the Christians, for Mohammedans do not burn their dead, but in any case it was the best thing they could do. Yet it was a lamentable sight, and still more lamentable it was to see their black forms creeping into the old batteries we had abandoned, and peering across the river just within tempting rifle range from my window.

In the middle of that night I was awakened by a violent outburst of firing from the river side. Contrary to the prudence of the country, I had undressed, but thinking that now at last the Turks had plucked up heart to rush the bridge by a night attack (a thing they could have done without serious loss over and over again), I ran as I was out into the road to see. There were a few more shots, and then all was still, and the stars went on with their twinkling. As I waited, terrific pain suddenly came upon me, I suppose from the cold, and I rolled back to my plank, rigid and gasping. Mavro, supposing I was about to die, ran screaming into

the old ladies' apartment, and instantly one of them stood by my side. She was a noble-looking creature, with a face like one of the mindful avengers who dog the guilty man for his good. Without a moment's waste of time, she began pounding and kneading at my stomach with her clenched fists till I could have killed her and myself for the pain. Taking no notice of my agony, she then cut a flat square of bread from a loaf, stuck an upright match at each corner, placed it carefully over my midriff, and lighted the matches, so that they looked like a brilliant altar burning to the honour of some Chinese god of appetite. Taking a glass tumbler, she inverted it over that altar, and screwed the edges deep into my flesh. The flames, having at once burned up the air inside, went out, and, a vacuum being made, it seemed as though all the contents of my body were being drawn up under that tumbler with the greatest torture. Meantime the goddess of destiny, lifting her eyes and hands to heaven, began to mutter prayers and oracular enchantments, which, unfortunately, I could not understand. But looking at her and

then at the tumbler, and remembering a Thesalian scene in Apuleius, I was overcome with laughter, and the efficacy of the charms being possibly thereby assisted, recovery proceeded well from minute to minute. Before an hour passed, the pain had gone, and the old woman, as she covered me up, announced that if those enchantments had not been successful, she would have tried another method still more potent, but the secret of it goes too near the depths of being to be repeated at large.

For the next day and a half rain fell again, and the filth and misery of the town became almost unbearable. We had lost every kind of self-respect, shame, or decency. We wandered aimlessly about, irritable and brutish, chiefly seeking for something to eat, but seeking also to escape from the horror. Scores of would-be deserters were brought back under guard, and scores got away into the mountains, there to remain as brigands, the terror of everyone who had a rag to lose. In their place, I have no doubt, I should have taken to brigandage as well, especially if I could have lived by plundering

any citizen of the Concert of Europe. The rest of us stood about in the dirt, glowering at each other, and smiling ironical applause when our guns threw a casual shell among the Turks, or the distant boom from Preveza was heard.

But on the afternoon of Tuesday, May 18th, an extraordinary change came over us all. At five o'clock the sound of a trumpet was heard, blowing and blowing across the river, and a small party was seen approaching the bridge and waving a big white flag in front of them. It was the Turkish Consul, with Fouat Bey, that tyrant of Philipiades, and two or three Turkish officers. They said they had a telegram from Constantinople about an armistice. They were told they might cross the bridge if they would allow themselves to be blindfolded. This they refused, and Major Soutsos of the cavalry was sent backwards and forwards to them conducting the negotiations. Just before seven he went clattering over the bridge for the last time, a trumpet blowing before him. At seven o'clock, lo ! from our great battery on the barrack hill a white flag flew, and it was



answered by a white flag on Imaret. The Thirty Days War was over. It had begun on Easter Sunday, the 18th of April, and on Tuesday evening, the 18th of May, it ended.

Instantly the whole town burst into joy. It was sad to see it. Here was no victorious peace hard-won, no satisfied and triumphant song of "Home, brothers, home,"\* or "Spirit whose work is done—spirit of dreadful hour."† Crippled by the interference of the Powers in Crete and by long threats of blockade, deprived by treachery or some other unexplained reason of all benefit from her fleet, undrilled, untrained, untaught, hampered by her very enthusiasm, Greece was hopelessly defeated, and now lay at the mercy of her ancestral tormentor. This was the end of her noble effort on behalf of her brothers over the sea. All the enemies of

\* Now the soft peace-march beats, home, brothers, home!  
O happy man, O fortunate! for whom  
The well-known door, the faithful arms are open,  
The faithful tender arms with mute embracing.

Coleridge's *Piccolomini*, Act i. sc. iv.

† Walt Whitman's *Drum Taps*.

freedom throughout the world were full of triumph. How then could we sing :

“Turn and be not alarmed, O Libertad—turn  
your undying face,  
To where the future, greater than all the past,  
Is swiftly, surely preparing for you.”

We were hungry, wet, defeated, and miserable, sickened by stench, worn with fever, tortured by choleraic pains. Diphtheria and typhoid had broken out in the hospitals. We were surrounded by every form of agony and death. Yet, as the shops took down their shutters and spread out the remnants of their wares, the men went backwards and forwards up and down the long and filthy street cheering and laughing and greeting each other very much as if the heaven of victory had come at last.

Next evening I gave a farewell dinner to four artillery officers whom I had come to know in those better days at Pentepegadia. We spread it on a piece of board beside their trenches under the orange trees near the river, and sat there in the darkness till late at night whilst innumerable fire-flies glimmered around

us. At length, pouring out a wine like the washings of medicine bottles, but still real wine and dearly welcome, I asked them, greatly daring, to drink with me to the future of Greece. The poor fellows knew that the game was up : their country was ruined ; their own career was over ; they would never fire a gun again nor listen to the murmur of their shells dying away in the distance. But we all stood up, touched glasses, and repeating "The future of Greece !" drank in silence and parted. I think it was the saddest toast ever drunk among the sons of men.

Before daybreak next day (May 20th) I took a last look at the bridge and the beautiful town, and rode away through the slush and dirt, southward, ever southward. In the evening of the following day I swam far out into the Corinthian Gulf and again saw the sunset light upon the snows of Erymanthus. At Patras I sold the two ponies which had travelled side by side since we left their little village on the eastern slopes of Pindus. They had become more attached than brothers, and when different

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owners bought them and tried to lead them away, they planted all their four feet firmly in the dust, turned their eyes to each other, and refused to move. For them, too, the best time of comradeship was over.

## CHAPTER XIV

### IN CRETE

FOR ten days I was in Athens, awaiting disaster. There the noble city stood, the mother-city of freedom and of thought, and all the nations of the world to whom she had given thought and freedom were leagued against her. She herself was rent with suspicion and perplexity. She was impoverished by the thousands of her children who had come over land and sea to cling to her skirts for protection and food. And within three days march—a march that would be almost unopposed — lay the common enemy of mankind, waiting once more to enter her citadel. So I waited, full of forebodings, till a sudden order came telling me to go to Crete and try to discover what terms the Insurgents would now accept. On the evening of Thursday, June 3rd, I drove down to the Peiræus again with a heavier spirit even than before,

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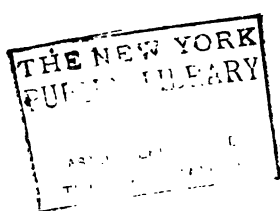
MEDITERRANEAN SEA

Statute Miles

To illustrate Greco Turkish War 1897.

J. M. DENT & CO.

George Philip & Son London & Liverpool



and slowly rounded Sunium in the dark. This time I had induced Sigalas himself to come with me, rather as a friend than on business terms. Many are the English people he has served in the years past, and I can imagine no one more helpful, thoughtful, and tender-hearted.

Waking next morning, I saw the purple sea glinting past the port-holes, and here and there stood an island rock. We cast anchor in the harbour of Syra, and I climbed the two hills on which that brilliant town of red and white and yellow is built. One hill is for the Orthodox, the other for the Catholics, and as usual the Catholic is the more beautiful. In the Cathedral on its summit it was quite comforting to find the familiar saints one knew—St Francis or St Martin—instead of the Greek or Russian names so meaningless to us. But from the terrace outside a better shrine still was in sight, and I stood there long looking over the sea at three low hills on a low island, all bare and reddish yellow in the sun. On the left under light clouds rose the mountains of Andros and Tenos. Paros and Naxos stood to the south,



but that island low and bare, so small and insignificant, was Delos itself—Delos, which the old poet once heard the immortals call the shining star on earth's black round. There it lay, that shining star, a rock which many might not notice, but shining on for ever. And so all day we went moving quietly among

The sprinkled isles,  
Lily on lily, that o'erlace the sea,  
And laugh their pride when the light wave lisps  
Greece.

At four o'clock on Saturday morning I beheld the jagged peaks of Crete rising sharp into a daffodil sky above a film of white mist which covered all the lower ground. Soon afterwards we anchored in the midst of an English fleet off Heraklion or Candia (or Castro, as the common people invariably call it, from its masses of old Venetian walls). Around us lay the *Royal Oak*, the *Trafalgar*, and three or four other clean and tidy ships with the White Ensign flapping from the stern. We rowed into the brilliant little Venetian harbour, still adorned with three lions of St Mark, and I found myself in a Moham-

medan town. The population was, of course, almost without exception Greek by race, and Greek was the language ; but they were the descendants of Greeks who could not hold out against the oppression of their conquerors, and now in fanaticism, cruelty, and even in appearance, they have become more Turkish than the Turks themselves. It is the natural fruit of generations of shame at their own apostasy. The Christian Greeks in this and the other towns had nearly all been slaughtered or had escaped to swell the wretched crowd which still sat helpless on the pavements of the Peiræus.

But Candia itself was gorgeous in colour that sunshiny morning. Striped awnings of red and white or of yellow were hung over the streets for shade. The open stalls were gay with fruit and bronze bowls and the beautiful Cretan knives. The men loitered about in the Turkish fez and great white sleeves and loose trousers of blue cotton. Here and there ran a little girl, her brown body wound round with lengths of muslin all rose or all saffron. And against the deep blue sky gleamed the houses, white or

blue, with the heavily latticed windows of the harems deep brown in contrast. Going westward through the town I came upon a company or two of Turkish soldiers at drill. They stood there in their dark and tattered uniforms, as vicious and scoundrelly a pack of wolves as could be imagined, but slack as their drill was, it was so immeasurably better than the Greek that it looked smart in comparison. Beyond the Turkish lines lay a scene full of strange contrast. In trim rows of tents along the old Venetian ramparts, looking west and south to the bare brown peak of Mount Ida and the birthplace of Zeus, were stationed 350 Welsh Fusileers and 400 Seaforth Highlanders, with a mule battery. Walking up and down between the tents, I listened with silent delight to the dialects of our country, uttered in easily imagined remarks on the heat, the thirst, the foreigners, and the condemnable and sanguinary character of things in general. It was difficult to realise that as they lay cursing and laughing there they were in fact engaged in defending the Turk against a high-hearted but un-

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organised people struggling for freedom. And on the eastern side of the town the Turks were similarly protected by Italians—fine, quick-stepping fellows they were too, in a splendour of blue and feathers.

It was the same thing over again at Retimo, the central town of the three along the north coast of Crete, except that there the force directed against the Christians was Russian. Off the town lay the enormous Russian ironclad *Navarino* (a fine name to defend the Turk with !) and there for the first time I saw Russian soldiers. In their working uniforms of white canvas with large top-boots, they looked a grand, broad-shouldered, broad-faced set of men. Light haired, and with plenty of stuff in them, they went about their work with the patient strength of bullocks. Physically they were beyond comparison the finest troops in Crete, except, indeed, a small body of Montenegrin giants, which Russia had sent in her own pay, and for her own purposes.

Next morning we anchored off Canea itself, and there found the armies of all the Powers

represented, except that Germany, true to Bismarck's famous sentence, had not troubled to send a single Pomeranian grenadier. The general situation was concisely typified by a little collection of the flags clustered on the highest point of the old fortifications, like ornaments on a birthday cake for a good child. In the midst stood the emblem of the Red Sultan, with crescent and star. Round it were the flags of the Christian nations in a protecting circle—the Union Jack, the Tricolour, the flag which covers Venice, and the rest of them, a sight unique in the history of the world. The position overlooked a chaos of burnt and ruined streets, houses, and shops, which had been the Christian quarter of the town a few months before. Among the ruins the Cathedral still stood, almost unharmed. Its interior was crammed with furniture, bedding, pots and pans saved from the Turk and the fire. We passed it on our way out to Suda Bay, just before we issued from the town walls between a grimy Turk and a Seaforth Highlander, who stood glaring at each other as sentries on the

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main gate. And in that glorious harbour of Suda Bay, the true secret of Crete's prolonged enslavement, lay the great battleships of the world, gathered in protection round two or three little Turkish boats, which looked as though they were made about the time when our fathers first heard with bewilderment that iron ships would float.

It was Sunday, and in the afternoon I asked Sigalas to come for a walk. He consented on condition we did not get into danger (he had been in an English yacht off Canea during the slaughters some months before, and the memory never left his mind. Even as we went about the streets he would say, "Oh, sir, they do be looking so black at me, those horrid Turks!") So we strolled eastward along by the sea through the garden suburb of Halépa, where our philo-Turkish consul, Biliotti, and other officials live. In front rose a long and rocky edge, cutting off the great promontory of Akrotiri, which forms the northern shore of Suda Bay. Along the edge were the flags of the Powers on the line of outposts defending the town. Nearest the sea

and next beyond the French, I noticed with some surprise the familiar blue and white cross of Greece. The hesitating and cowardly policy of England during the past year had made that flag so much more to me than my own, that we scrambled up the rocky slope towards it, passing in fact over the very scene of the shameful bombardment of the Christians by the English and other fleets about five months before. As we went up the French sentries ought to have fired on us, but I did not discover that till afterwards, and they never saw us among the rocks. Approaching the Greek flag, we were challenged by some wild and insurrectionary figures on sentry-go, and when Sigalas answered, mentioning the name of the *Daily Chronicle*, they crowded round us with enthusiastic welcome. That good luck which so often guided me unwittingly, had led me to the very headquarters of the eastern insurgent bands. The sentries conducted us at once into a labourer's cottage, the only shelter on the heights, and seated me in the place of honour on the table, while three captains sat on a bed, and a host of picturesque

warriors crowded into the room till it was choke full of rifles, pistols, Cretan knives, bronzed faces, and fine black beards. The men were grander fellows even than the Thessalian Irregulars, and their keen-eyed, upright look showed that the Cretan women had done their best to keep the race free from the taint of the Turkish dog. Round their heads they all had the Cretan black handkerchief wound, and their trousers were the Cretan undivided bag, almost the only ugly thing in Crete. Making the best of their scanty means for hospitality, they instructed the labourer's wife to milk two goats into a tumbler at intervals for my refreshment, and then the conference began.

The details of what they said are no longer of importance, though the situation in Crete never changes much from one generation to another, and in spite of all the promises of the European Concert, it has not changed yet. There are about 300,000 people on the island, of whom some 75,000 are Mussulmans. From the remainder the Insurgents told me they could muster 50,000 armed men with great rapidity



in the various district by the ringing of the village bells. That particular band which held the promontory of Akrotiri could muster 6000 for war. I pointed out that in their present position a superior force could drive them into the sea without escape; they replied they had chosen the promontory for that very reason, so that they might fight the better and kill more Turks. Like the other Irregulars they counted success not by victory but by the numbers killed. A week or two before, they said, they had two guns brought them by the Greeks, but the Admirals had insisted they should be sent down when the Greek troops left the island, and rather than bring trouble on Colonel Vassos they had given them up. The Admirals had also objected to their flying the Greek flag, and had shelled it down twice, but they intended to keep it flying as a sign of their determination for ultimate union. From this hope of ultimate union with Greece nothing could move them. It went on living from one generation to another, and no amount of suffering or massacre could ever kill it. But they recognised that owing to

the misfortune of the war, union was for the time impossible. On one condition they were now willing to accept any terms on which the Powers might agree. That condition was the withdrawal of all Turkish troops and officials from the island. They were themselves only anxious to end the state of war, and get back to their work under decent government. But unless the Turks went, they would fight to the last. On that question no compromise was to be thought of.

After about an hour's discussion our conference broke up, and parting from them with the usual compliments, Sigalas and I began the descent for the town. Hardly had we reached the foot of the ridge when a French sentry fired "across our bows," and next moment we were under arrest. In the midst of some fine gesticulation, I, as the chief offender, was marched off between two neurotic Parisians to a captain of the Seaforths on our outpost, about two miles away. I told him I was anxious to get back to the town in time for dinner, if possible, and, with a

sigh over the absurdities of the situation, he released me. Running down the hills and along the road, we just scraped through the gates as the Turk and the Highlander were fastening them up for the night. In passing the guard, I remarked to the corporal that the Turks looked such scoundrels it was difficult not to fire on them at sight. "But we have strict orders to the contrary," he answered; and I recognised the power of discipline.

That night Sigalas and I dined at a flimsy little café, which had been built at the end of the quay by French and Armenian enterprise, and with some justice was called "Au Concert Européan." To me it was always a place of special interest, for an Under-Secretary had recently roused the laughter of the House of Commons by informing them that starving Crete was in reality doing "a roaring trade," and there can be no doubt that his statement must have been founded on the account books of that restaurant. For it was the one point of prosperity in the whole gloomy island, and

what with the French and Russians drinking healths round its tables till they could no longer stand, and certain officers (chiefly French and Russian too) concluding commercial arrangements with feminine apparitions who sat in the corners and were wonderful linguists, the café did a trade which might fairly be described as "roaring." Those apparitions of golden hair and other decoration had undergone strange and varied fortunes. Originally there had been but three, but the economic law had stepped in to curtail their monopoly, and one afternoon a steamer hailing from Smyrna had brought some fifteen or twenty more. They had first tried to settle at Candia and at Retimo, but the custom-house authorities, acting on behalf of Turkish morality, had refused them a landing as being contraband. With shame and defiant tears the poor things had been driven on to Canea, only to be met with a like refusal from the unbending austerity of the Turk. But it so happened that an Italian officer stood watching, and calling upon two Italian sections, he brought

them at the double along the quay to the rescue of the distressed. With fixed bayonets, in two lines, he drew up his men on each side of the gangway, and between the lines the dainty shoes and chiffons and wayworn faces marched into the town in grateful security, to the eternal glory of the European Concert of the Powers. It was strange to see the mixture of derision, shame, and attraction with which the Cretans, both Christian and Mussulman, watched them passing to and fro. But from the moment of their arrival, the Under-Secretary certainly was justified in saying that starving Crete was doing a roaring trade; if, indeed, starving Crete may be identified with them and their restaurant.

In the middle of dinner, whilst I was listening to the story of these adventures and distresses, suddenly I heard the chant of the muezzin from the minaret across the waters of the harbour, which seemed to glisten with the brilliant darkness of the night. He was urging the faithful to believe in God alone, and ponder only upon the words of His

prophet. The contrast with the scene around me was peculiar, and there came into my mind the verse :—

“Alike for those who for To-day prepare,  
And those that after some To-morrow stare,  
A Muezzin from the tower of darkness cries,  
‘Fools ! your Reward is neither Here nor There.’”

Next day, to avoid the inconvenience of being fired upon and arrested every time I crossed the European lines, I begged a pass of the Italian admiral, the senior authority in the island, and laid my plans for an excursion into the interior. Things in Crete were at that moment just at the slack. The Greek troops had gone, and no one knew what was going to happen next. The minds of all were still much perturbed, and I had many solemn warnings that the Cretans would shoot me and the Turks would hang me on an olive. I knew that both could not happen, and as a matter of fact there was very little risk in what I intended, for even then in spite of the exhibition of our national impotence, the Turks would have hesitated before they murdered an Englishman, and as

for the Insurgents I had a secret letter for their greatest chief stitched up in the lining of my waistcoat. But I was a little afraid for Sigalas who had a comfortable house in Athens and some good quail-shooting on one of the islands—things he naturally did not wish to exchange for a future world. However, with a courage which really meant a great deal in one who had lately seen the Turk at his worst, he insisted on going with me wherever I went, and one lovely June morning off we set on thin Turkish horses south-westward over the fertile but devastated plain towards the conspicuous entrenched hill called Shoubashi, or the fort, a place strongly held by the French, Russians, and Italians as the last outpost of the European defenders of the Turks in that direction. The castle on the hill-top is one of the innumerable block-houses which the Turks built all over the island to keep the Christians in check, much as the English built the forts in the Highlands and planted the garrisons in Ireland. After prolonged debate and scrutiny a French captain passed us out of European protection, and we

entered the "neutral zone;" that is to say, a district in crossing which you are exposed equally to fire from both sides.

The zone was two or three miles broad, and I crossed it at the edge of a plain leading up to great mountains on the south, and covered with olive groves, or in the wilder parts with masses of crimson oleander in full bloom. In the gorges the oleander was growing far up the mountains too, and from a distance looked something like the heather of the Wicklow hills above Bray, where heather is most brilliant. Side by side with the oleander I found the carob, or "wooden horn" as the Cretans call it, and in its long pods with their sticky sweet juice I recognised the black "locust-beans" of my childhood. I was told that they were exported for the adulteration of champagne and of cocoa—which seems to show that a minor poet might successfully set himself to write like Swinburne and—whom shall we say? on alternate days. But in fact the carob is used almost entirely for cattle, and in its cultivation lies the hope of the Mediterranean,



for then cattle might drive out the goat, that natural archetype of the evil one in pastoral lands.

The whole of the district for miles around was ruined and uncultivated. All the Christian villages were hopelessly destroyed—the windows gone, the roofs battered in, the walls picked away or black with burning. Not a soul was living in them. Those who had escaped with life were either paupers on the Greek Government in the Peiræus, or had taken to the mountains with their children and small possessions. Round the villages the orange trees and olives (the chief wealth of the country) had generally been burnt or cut down, especially if they were the property of the Christian churches. The pomegranate trees, peaches, and mulberries were left untended. The vines were unpruned, and thousands were being eaten away by Turkish goats and the horses of the European Powers. That year the communal wine-presses in every village would be dry. In one place, it is true, I met a deputation of Christians under the white flag going to petition the

Italians (who know what vineyards are) for protection whilst they sulphured their vines to save them from blight. But such protection could only be granted under the guns of the fort, and elsewhere the Mussulmans had their way. Of course they had suffered too. Many of their olives and one or two villages had been destroyed. Here and there we came upon a Bey's summer residence and harem in ruins. But few Mussulmans have property far from the towns, and the European troops arrived just in time to protect the estates of the worst oppressors.

Meantime famine was settling down upon the land, and the people were beginning to starve. During the next day or two, in remote valleys beyond the reach of the Mussulman, I did, it is true, see a few women attempting to scrape up a thin and neglected harvest, but the men, almost without exception, were under arms upon the hills, and the margin between them all and starvation was growing daily narrower. The presence of the Greek troops under Vassos and the blockade

by the Powers to prevent supplies reaching them had intensified the suffering. Greece, it is true, in spite of her own misery and destitution was still sending over a little food in boats which managed to get to land at night before the guns of our fleet could sink the small bags of flour and biscuits to the bottom. At one place I met a poor woman, whose husband had been killed in the war, crying bitterly along a mountain path because she had somehow arrived too late for her portion of flour—only half a pound—from a Greek boat which had just come in. We gave her about half-a-crown which I was told would keep her in luxury—Cretan luxury—for a fortnight. But the general misery was inconceivable to the comfortable English mind, and as to “trade,” the only sign of reviving trade I saw was a fine old lady working alone in one of the ruined villages, stirring up a puddle of mortar. She was rebuilding her home, the sixth time she had helped to build it, she said, since her virginity, and she supposed she would have to build it once or

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twice more before she died. That sort of thing must give a fine personal interest to one's home, but "business stability" cannot choose but suffer.

After crossing the neutral zone we were informed of our approach to the insurgent outposts by a few casual bullets, fired not so much to do us any harm as to warn the other sentries that someone was approaching, if he were not hit first. Tying a handkerchief to my stick I rode forward and was soon in the midst of the usual crowd of picturesque men with knives and rifles. They were too anxious for news, too eager for a definite peace to be dangerous; and besides, in reserve I had that secret letter. The outposts indeed embraced us with fervour, and conducted us forward over a broad torrent course covered with oleander, through which even in that season a deep and silent stream eddied along a reed-grown channel. Beyond another plain of olives we reached their headquarters in the scattered village of Alikianú, where several hundred of the insurgents were

lounging about, very hungry and very unhappy, under the shade of the orange orchards. As usual, a conference was quickly gathered in the waste garden of one of the houses. Sigalas and I were set on chairs in the middle with three or four of the best speakers opposite us, and around, in a deep circle, stood five or six hundred men with arms. Before I noted down any definite statement of the speakers, I appealed for confirmation to the captains and the host, for it is an eloquent people, and in the glow of rhetoric there is no end to what they will say, and believe. But in all but two or three cases the statements were confirmed by the crowd of men with shouts and brandished rifles, so that the scene was like a meeting of an early English wapentake.

The Christian demands as laid down by the speakers were exactly the same as I had already heard from the insurgent captains on Akrotiri. The one fixed and essential point was that the Turkish troops should leave the island. Unless those troops were withdrawn, the Christians

would remain in arms and be exterminated rather than submit. To submit would only mean another massacre, another revolt, and the whole ghastly story repeated on an average every ten years. If the troops went, the Mussulman civil population would be left in peace, and might well be glad themselves to have a time of regular government and quiet. The speakers pointed to the example of Thessaly, where Turks had lived unmolested under Greek rule, and even been elected mayors and deputies. All looked forward to ultimate union with Greece, and when I suggested that in some cases, as in Ireland and the American colonies, union with a central power across the sea had not been thought a great blessing to the smaller community, they replied with much shaking of rifles that they would have union and run the risk of all the rest. In fact the case of Ireland was not really parallel, for there is no deep difference of race between the Cretans and the Greeks of the mainland. When I further suggested that politics was just the

worst part of Greece, that the Athenian Chamber was not a model of wisdom and incorruptibility, and that in any case the Cretan deputies would be lost there in a crowd, the rifles began to rage so furiously that I asked Sigalas to change the subject. Later on in the afternoon we went through the whole matter again with smaller numbers, but with the same result, and then we rode back toilsomely along the sea-beach, and passing through the Turkish lines after a good deal of difficulty and passive resistance, we entered Canea again at nightfall.

Early next morning I returned to the same insurgent headquarters again, and by a piece of good luck was this time able to accomplish the worst part of the journey in one of Her Majesty's torpedo gunboats. Just beyond the high-piled village of Platania on its natural citadel, I was put to shore in a boat, the captain, a violent Turkophile, obligingly training a gun upon me, ready to shell the insurgents if they opened fire from the beach. For at sight of the boat they had come swarming down to the sea from the gaping ruins of the village and all manner

of holes, so that, indeed, to the unaccustomed eye they looked ludicrously savage. For a moment they reminded me rather painfully of "the enemy" in the last scene of a military tournament at Islington. My crew saw the resemblance also, and in the midst of laughter I steered the boat end on against the sand. Instantly we were welcomed with the usual cordiality, the only fighting being to decide which should show us the greatest kindness. Besides Sigalas, a Greek Professor was with me ; for he was devoting his vacation to service as an unofficial envoy between the Admirals and the insurgent leaders. A Cretan himself, he had many relations among the Christian forces, and, as a matter of course, every relation thought it right and decent to kiss him. Now, as, in accordance with Greek etiquette, every man born in the same village ranks as a foster-brother, the well-washed, anglicised, and rather fastidious professor had to submit to be kissed at intervals during the day by scores of bearded and tattered old brigands whose ideas of refinement were on a different level



dined, and wondrous beasts. In fact, I myself had some hope and a fond desire to see the beautiful wild goat which is not uncommon on some parts of the range, though happily very hard to shoot. But I learned afterwards that it would have taken me two days' climb to reach him, and then he is seldom seen except just at twilight. Still, straight in front of me stood the lofty ridge which conceals the village of Lakkos, that true "nurse of heroes," where all the best fighters of Crete are born, and higher still rose the edge of the strange volcanic plateau of Omalos, across which one may pass to the southern sea. Hour after hour I lay on my mountain-point watching, till at length an Insurgent found me, and, pointing me out the distant plot of wasted and uncultivated land he owned, showed me the meaning of utter ruin. He then turned to discuss the political situation, and after three quarters of an hour's converse, remarked politely that he was sorry to disturb me, but he had been sent to say that the great chief himself had returned, and had been for some

time awaiting me at supper. Recognising the familiar ways of the "Messenger" in the old Greek tragedies, I started at a run down the mountains in some concern.

The great chief was the man for whom I carried that secret letter. I found him seated in a small circle of subordinate leaders, who looked very subordinate indeed in his presence. When he rose to meet me his pure white beard streamed to his waist, but he bore his splendid stature of six feet five inches as erect and active as a young man. He was the great Hadji Mikhali (or Michalis) a son of Lakkos, and the most heroic. His whole life had been spent in battling against the oppressor of his race. His father, whose name was the same, had been the hero of the "Great Insurrection" of 1821 to 1830 and had fallen in battle just before the time when Crete won her freedom and was then thrown back by Europe as a sop to the Turk. Begotten and suckled under such traditions, the younger Hadji had volunteered in the Russian army to fight the Turk and his Allies in the Crimea. But it was in the

terrible Cretan struggle of 1866 to 1869 that he became the most illustrious of his countrymen. Even among Cretans he was famed for his strength, and like Achilles was called "the swift-footed." It was he who directed the harassing warfare against Mustapha Pasha, and he who by night cut his way out through the Turkish army under Ali Riza at Hosti. In every movement since, he has been the leading spirit, and there is no end to his exploits. After his supper of raw eggs and cheese, he sat with me till far into the night under the olives, where the nightingales were singing their last songs to the moon, and now and again the little Greek owl uttered its single, strangely musical cry, like a woman's voice in the ecstasy of sweet but sad delight—a cry so different from the "merry note" of the English winter's song. Magnificent in the moonlight against the deep blue of summer darkness, the old man told me of savage contests, of imprisonments with the Turks, of strange escapes, and wanderings through Russia and many lands. At last when the east was already white with coming day, he

compelled me to take his bed—it was a wooden bench in a kind of kitchen—and himself strode off to sleep, in a ditch for all I know. But early next morning, I held his mule and saw him ride away in the very splendour of old age to execute justice in a neighbouring village where disputes had arisen. There was no kind of law or police on the island now, but “Hadji’s” decision was sufficient, and no one ever thought of disputing it. One could not imagine a finer model of a “judge in Israel,” and the Cretans are a great deal nobler than Israel ever was.

The owner of the house in which we were staying was in his way a remarkable man as well. For one thing, he was an almost perfect type of a human being. Though not quite so tall as Hadji, he was grandly made, and the black-bearded head with sad but brilliant eyes and the nose of a falcon promised all the best human capacities of thought and decision. He conversed with me in French, for he had been many years practising as a barrister in Paris, but had lately returned to settle on the farm in his native village, where he still called

himself a barrister, of all things in the world. As I watched him going round his outbuildings, with a large black scarf tied about his hair, a deep blue jacket showing the white shirt sleeves, a blue bag for trousers, and round his waist a heavy belt stuck full of gleaming knives and pistols, it was strange to reflect on the contrast of all that with Parisian life. In place of his first wife—a Parisian girl, full no doubt of the charm of French womanhood—he had lately married a little slip of a thing from the village, with hair plastered over her forehead and two pig-tails down her back. Like other Cretan women she was supposed to be invisible, but when I went to wash in the morning in a rivulet among the olive trees near the house, she came and washed beside me with idyllic politeness. As some return for her hospitality I offered her a piece of pink soap from Athens. I was half afraid she would eat it, but she knew better than that.

In preparing to depart I was met with a request which gave me great trouble. A few days before a Russian soldier had deserted to

the Insurgent lines on account of some officer's cruelty. He kept as close to "Hadji" as possible, because he alone understood Russian, and there he continually sat, on a wall beside the house, an image of silent appeal. But that morning the Russians had sent a message that he was to be returned at once, and would be kindly treated. It was now proposed that we should take him back. The Professor considered we ought to comply, for he was anxious to keep on good terms with the Powers for the sake of his diplomacy. The Insurgents did not know what to do with him; they were themselves starving, were very eager for peace, did not want to offend the Powers, and were afraid a deserter in the conspicuous white uniform would only be a trouble. "Why not take him," they said, "since we have the Russian promise no harm shall befall him?" But without any hesitation I absolutely refused to have anything to do with it, and told them it would be more merciful to shoot the poor fellow at once. I asked Sigalas to explain this to them very carefully, and further that if the man were entrusted

to anyone else to deliver back, I would shoot him myself. All this time the deserter was seated on the wall beside us, watching the discussion, which in a dim sort of way he knew concerned his fate. At last, after a good deal of anger, it was arranged that I should leave with the Parisian barrister enough money to feed the man for a time and transport him to Athens in the next Greek boat that ran the blockade. This restored good humour, and we all parted with effusion, the Insurgents providing three mules to carry us within range of the European lines. So we rode back by way of Shoubashi, and from there tramped homewards under a violent sun.

On our way we passed the miserable hovels of the leper village, about two miles from the town. Here the lepers of the district live, rotting at ease. They beg up and down the roads, the two main articles of the Mussulman creed being always to give to a leper and never to kill a mangy dog. They marry among themselves, and their children are often beautiful till about fourteen. Then the taint begins its

work, and slowly they rot too. At that time all the Christian lepers had fled for their lives from their homes, and were at large throughout the island. Only the Mussulmans were left, and they had taken the opportunity of plundering the dwellings of their Christian comrades in the living death.

We entered Canea just as the ladies of the harems, bundled up in black wrappings, with black masks, embroidered with silver flowers, over their faces, and black umbrellas jammed down on to the tops of their heads, began to dodder along the streets on their evening walk, like ghastly mutes in some funereal play of Maeterlinck. On an open space upon the Venetian ramparts, beside the gate, the Turkish garrison was drawn up in companies. A trumpeter blew, the band played a few bars, then all the troops shouted and howled and kissed their hands, the officers "carried" swords, the guard presented arms. When the paroxysm was over, the trumpeter blew again, the band played a few bars, all the troops shouted and kissed their hands, and the rest of the ceremony was re-



peated. These things were done three or four times over, to publish the glory of the Sultan who sat in Constantinople. Then the red sun went down, and in the east there rose a round and greenish moon.

## CHAPTER XV

### RESURGAM

A FEW days afterwards, Sigalas and I left Crete, and sailing back to the mainland put to shore at Kalamata at the head of the Messenian Gulf. From there we crossed the range of Taygetus by the ravines of the Langada pass, probably the way by which the Spartan armies marched to the old Messenian wars, and on the 17th of June we were in Sparta itself.

Beside the stream of the Eurotas that night, I watched the water sliding from pool to pool over its broad and stony bed between the oleanders. They were the pools in which the Spartans in old days used to bathe, and where they came to worship the Two Brothers whose affection was so perfect that they agreed never to see each other again to all eternity but to live and die on alternate days rather than have their comradeship severed by final death. Close

at hand upon the west rose the peaks of Taygetus, cleft and torn by earthquake and torrents, in the sheltered gorges of which drifts of grey snow could still be seen under the moonlight. Eastward stood the domed hills of Parnon and at their base some flat-topped heights, the seat of prehistoric towns lost in forgetfulness. Silent around me lay the plain of hollow Sparta, fertile in orange and olive and mulberry; and amid light summer clouds hung that brilliant moon which had often played so dominant a part in this valley when the Spartans walked in her light.

It was here then that the Dorian race had come to live from the rough land of Epirus which I had seen, and here they had established that serious rule of conduct which seems to us nearly incredible. To combine and obey for some intangible ideal of Spartan honour, to give up all personal tastes and desires, and to take no account of words—those were the directions which their law-giver laid down for them to follow. He was perhaps wrong. He saw the national weaknesses all too clearly, and in his determination to

overcome them he sinned against the spirit of race. The future influence on mankind, at all events, did not lie with Sparta. Except for a few compact and living sentences, except for the record of a few noble lives, she has passed away, leaving hardly a trace, while her rival's power in every form of human interest seems likely to last as long as mankind. But the very existence for several centuries of such a mode of life—that prolonged triumph of human determination over the common nature of man, was as marvellous as any supernatural miracle, almost as marvellous as the Athenian genius itself. At a moment, therefore, when it was a relief to remember that greater things than miracles have happened in history, the memory of Sparta's peculiar distinction and the sight of the place where she had stood, suggested encouragement in the midst of disaster.

The magnitude of that disaster it was indeed impossible to exaggerate. On the field and in finance the ruin of Greece was complete. Committed helplessly by the King into the hands of the Powers, she had practically ceased to be a nation. If they had dared to consummate the

crime which they had inaugurated by their jealousies and hatred of liberty, they might have left her again bodily to the possession of the Turk, and she could hardly have protested. And indeed in that case she would have been delivered from the politicians and foreign financiers who prey upon her life, and in a few years we might have seen an uprising of the whole nation, compared to which the War of Independence seventy years ago was child's play. Even now if the Turks remain in Thessaly, we may confidently expect a renewal of the peasant warfare of earlier days, as the Greek people gradually recover their spirit and find that in the end they have no one but themselves to trust to. But for the present we must regard Greece as non-existent. Like France in 1871, she does not count, and unhappily her recovery is likely to be much slower than the recovery of France, for the Powers have always taken care to keep her territory too small for a nation, and in Thessaly she has lost the most valuable possession even of what she had received.

As to the causes of so overwhelming a disas-

ter, there may have been some which cannot be known yet, and perhaps never will be known. Why did Greece, with absolute control of the sea, make practically no use whatever of her fleet? Why did she not at least bombard Salonica, or cut the communications at half-a-dozen places along the Turkish coast? It may be that, against an enemy who has no fleet and no commerce, a fleet is almost useless, unless it can be supported by a sufficient landing force. It may be, as now seems likely, that some jobbing contractor swindled the fleet of its ammunition. But, in any case, its inaction during the war remains the great unexplained mystery of the whole, and suspicions of treachery, collusion, or the compulsion of some greater Power inevitably arose, and still refuse to be silenced.

As to the army, the case is very different. It appears to me quite unnecessary to go behind the scenes and suspect foul play in high quarters, or acquiescence in defeat for some pre-arranged purpose of dynasty or politics. The spirit of the troops was, it is true, continually

damped, unsettled, and distracted by the threats and selfish action of the Concert; but I saw enough of the Greek army to understand that they would be quite incapable in themselves of resisting a less formidable power than the Turk. In the first place, it was enormously outnumbered. A nation of two and a half million cannot often successfully defy a nation of over forty million. But far worse than want of numbers was the want of generalship, the want of military capacity in the officers from the top downwards. Of the fiasco in Thessaly, of the miserable collapse of all the pavement-knights, dancing-masters, and squires of dames, who made up the Staff at Larissa, I do not wish to speak, because I did not actually see it. We may best judge what the cause of all that was when we remember the change which came over the whole spirit of the army the moment a chance of responsible command was given to Smolenski, a rough but true-hearted soldier, who had always steadily refused to take part in the shabby Parisian gaieties and feminine intrigues of Athens, but had gone quietly about his busi-

ness, and learnt the science of war to some purpose. But in Epirus I could watch the course of generalship from day to day, and though it was at first almost brilliant, and was never so disastrous as in Thessaly, no possible excuse can be made for the error of leaving one single battalion unsupported in defence of such a position as Pentepegadia. That one small but ruinous mistake must have been due to inertness of mind, or to ignorance of the elements of strategy which require no special science at all. Do what General Manos might, he never recovered from the loss of that one position, and with it vanished his chance of a glorious success, which might have been laid in the balance even against the loss of Thessaly. The subsequent movements in Epirus were only attempts to regain the opportunity which had been thrown away without cause.

The shameful retreat upon Arta, when the Turks turned the Greek right on the mountain above Karavan Serai, was not the fault of generalship, but of weakness in the regimental officers. They could not hold their men ; a large number



of them did not try. Men will generally stand as long as they have confidence in their officers, and the officers take equal risk, or even claim that lion's share of danger which is their due. But, except in the artillery, the Greek, privates, for various reasons, very seldom enjoyed that absolute confidence in their officers which is the very soul of an army. The majority of the officers were ignorant or half-trained in warfare, and quite inexperienced. Large numbers of subalterns were grey-haired old men who had lost the dash of youth and become grandfatherly of habit. Worst of all, the regimental officers were being continually changed about from one battalion to another, even during the war, so that they were ignorant of the very names of the men they commanded, and of their individual dispositions they knew nothing. Between the privates and their officers there was very little of that personal affection which is beyond all comparison the strongest encouragement in the face of death. There was very little respect even, and not much personal influence of any kind. But it is exactly personal influence which

is the secret of discipline. It is true that the position of a Greek officer is in one respect far more difficult than in the English army. For in England social equality is unknown, and every officer has the advantage of a recognised elevation to start with ; but from the curse of inequality the Greeks are entirely and unconsciously free. They are, I suppose, the most truly democratic people in the world, and a peasant will sit down beside a general or prime-minister and discuss the situation with him as a gentleman on equal terms, which indeed he is. The Greek is not to be blinded by mere position or assumption of any kind, and like the Irishman he quickly sees through pretence, no matter in how exalted a station. A Greek officer's only chance, therefore, of winning respect or even obedience is by proved capacity, a dominating strength of character, and unhesitating knowledge of his work. Should he fall short, he will inevitably be detected and suspected, and having no prestige of birth or wealth to fall back upon will find his authority slip away like water from his hands the moment that the pressure of crisis

comes. This was, in fact, what happened over and over again. The officers were not conspicuously and unquestionably superior in warfare to their men. Their orders were questioned, often justly, and they had not strength of character to make themselves obeyed, right or wrong. Simply as officers, their position did not weigh in the balance against the lives of men ; confidence was shaken, and only panic remained. To people like ourselves, among whom the respect for "gentle-folk " is so deeply ingrained, these must seem hard conditions for officers of any kind ; but perhaps in the end it would not really be a bad thing for a nation if its officers, having nothing but their own excellence to depend upon for their authority, were compelled of necessity to be excellent.

On a brief railway journey near Patras during the war it happened that in the long third-class carriage there was a youngish man who soon made himself conspicuous by his heart-felt lamentations over the defeats in Thessaly. After a time he sprang up, and with faultless eloquence denounced the treachery and incapacity of all

the generals and ministers of state. He himself kept the one shop and a few goats in an obscure Arcadian village where he had recently been elected Demarch. "If only I were appointed general," he cried, with uplifted hands, "within a fortnight there would not be a single Turk on the soil of our native land." The people in the carriage rose and shouted their applause. If it had depended on their votes, the man would have been sent at once to take command in the field. It all sounded like a case of Cleon come again. But in reality it exactly illustrated not only the Greek sense of equality but the popular conception of war. From first to last the Greek people regarded war with a certain schoolboy naiveté, delightful but disastrous. From the old days of insurrection and casual outbreaks they have inherited their methods of irregular warfare, but of the duties and training of modern organised armies they had not at the beginning of the war conceived the smallest idea. My first day or two in Athens showed me that the men were practically undrilled, and week by week I learned that

the battalions had very little of the cohesion which comes of discipline, long practice side by side, and personal acquaintance with comrades and officers. The Andarti, not the Regulars, were the national ideal, and their methods were what the people meant by war. Looking back after the disaster, I am inclined to think the patriotic cause would have been as well served in the end if the race had been allowed to abide by their ancestral tactics, and had not attempted regular warfare at all, but hung upon their detested enemy with harassing swarms of sharpshooters and dare-devil gangs. It must not, of course, be supposed that Irregulars can be counted on as a fit substitute for thoroughly trained soldiers. But Greece had not trained soldiers. The average Greek had no conception of what is implied in the training and organisation of a regular army. Even the Evzoni, by far their best troops, were in reality little else than Irregulars roughly told off into battalions and rather hampered than aided by their organisation. The half century or so during which some sort of regular army has been established,

has not greatly changed the old national delight in the warfare of insurgents, Klephts, and Andarti. That is the kind of fighting the people regard with the affection of romance, and it is quite possible that if they had been allowed to depend solely upon that they would have done better, just as the Soudanese and Zulus were more formidable with javelins than with rifles. As it was, the Government did the very worst thing possible : they tried both systems side by side. They employed between 60,000 and 80,000 half-trained or untrained men to do duty for a regular army, and at the same allowed swarms of unorganised Irregulars to hang about the frontier and enter or quit the field of battle as they pleased. The presence of the regular army hindered the Irregulars in their natural method of fighting, and the presence of the Andarti was both ruinous and cruel to the regular troops. It is hard for men in any case to stand firm in the face of death, but it is almost impossible when they see scattered bands of others advancing and retiring around them, getting behind cover, or lying down at their own good

pleasure. All ranks are infected by a spirit of uncertainty and unrest, and at the very moment of crisis, when his nerves are on the stretch and he is almost sick with fear, the common soldier is not given fair play.

All these things—the hesitation between two opposite systems of warfare, the want of training in the men and of knowledge in the officers, the absence of true comradeship and personal influence in all ranks, the absence of old regimental traditions of valour and discipline, the lack of generalship, the spirit of distrust and uncertainty which want of confidence in their officers at once engendered on the first sign of defeat among a democratic, eloquent, and imaginative people—all this appears to furnish in itself sufficient explanation of disaster. As to the charges of cowardice against the whole race, it is hardly necessary to consider them, for under the conditions panic was inevitable. Under like conditions panic has seized both English and French. Or, if any still persist in the taunt, let them go themselves under fire; let them go under fire, exhausted with fatigue,

hunger, and want of sleep, without knowledge of the men to right and left of them, and without confidence in command, and let them notice what strange gusts of terror continually arise and strive to beat them from their purpose. I doubt if anyone has a right to speak about cowardice at all till he has discovered for himself all that is implied in the word courage. It is very easy for comfortable Englishmen, whose greatest risks have been run in a football match, to sneer at a poverty-stricken and long oppressed people for want of courage in face of enormous odds; but when I hear them, there rises before my mind a picture of the thin blue lines going into action against the impregnable entrenchments at Grimbovo for a cause which they knew to be hopeless, or I seem to stand again in hospital by the bedside of the young peasant girl Katarina Basaroponlo, who, without display or self-importance, had fought in men's clothes side by side with her two brothers at Domoko, and was terribly wounded; or I think of that still more heroic peasant woman of Epirus who



went up and down the firing line at Nicopolis carrying water and milk for the Irregulars, and was shot through back and thigh.

In the near East, Greece is still what she was of old, the one point of enlightenment and freedom, the one barrier against Oriental darkness and oppression. When greater Powers were hesitating through fear or selfishness, she alone had the courage to strike another blow against the barbarian despotism which still holds so many of her race in bondage. She failed, and by that failure she has well-nigh lost her national existence. For herself it is for the time an overwhelming disaster, and for all in Europe who are on the side of progress, and still cling to freedom, it is a disaster too. But history will do her justice for attempting almost the sole heroic deed that saves the last quarter of this century from insignificance and mediocrity, and already the just honour for that deed is paid to her by all who hate a policy of temporising acquiescence in wrong. And, besides reputation, she will in the end gain self-confidence and self-respect; or, if the worst should

happen, and she should disappear from the roll of nations, still her deed would be justified ; for every high-hearted people would choose to be wiped out of existence rather than to gain European recognition and commercial prosperity at the cost of honour and at the sacrifice of freedom.

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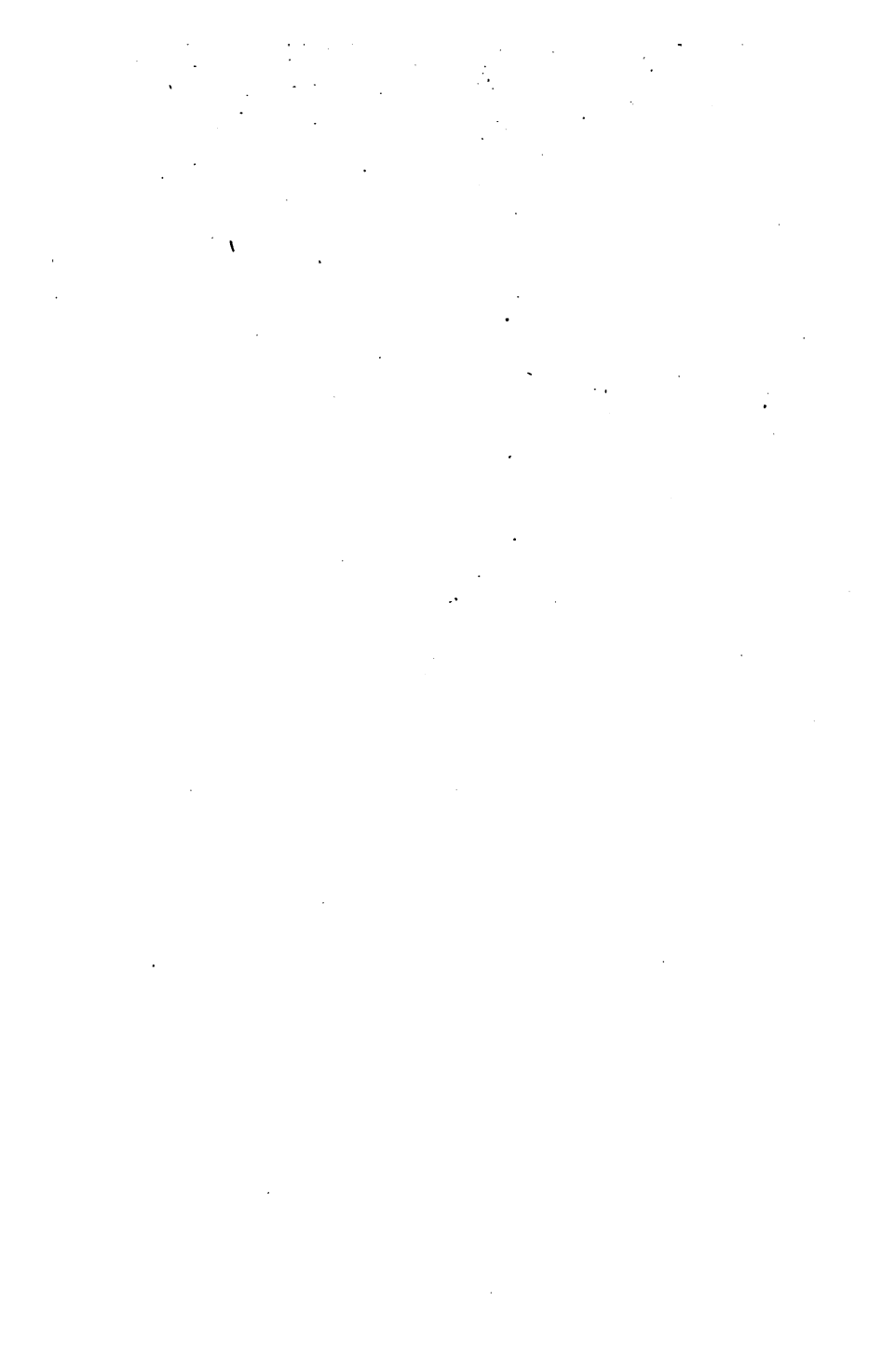
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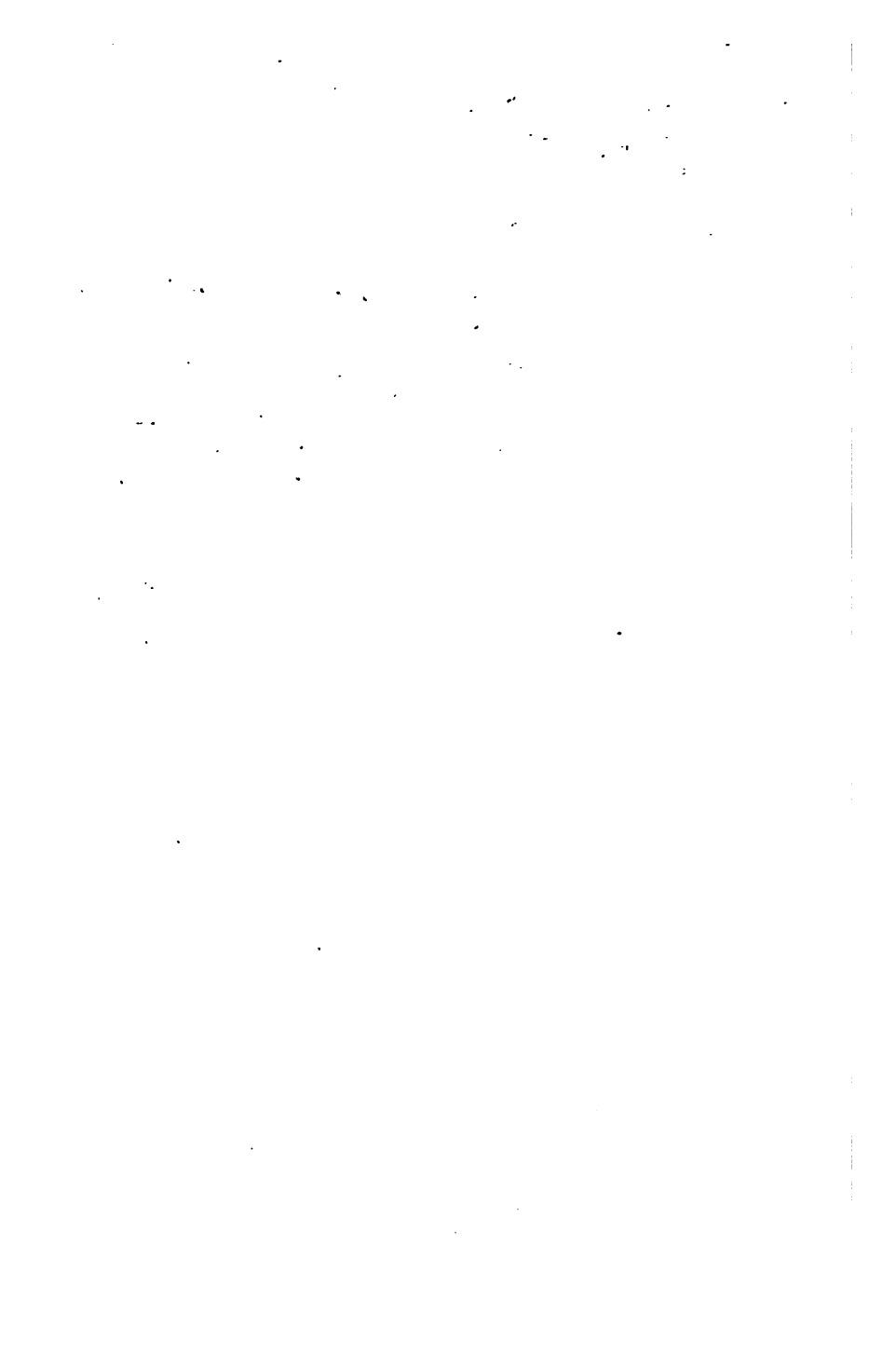
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